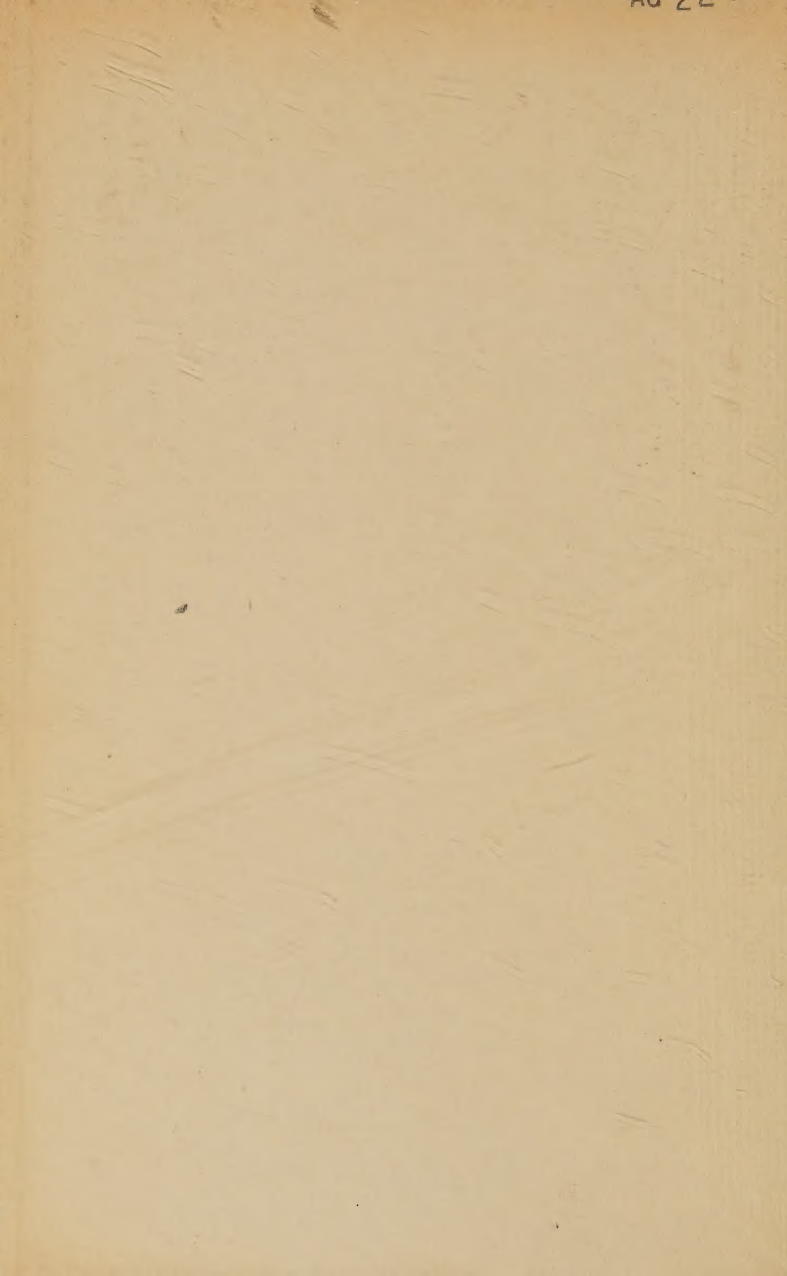
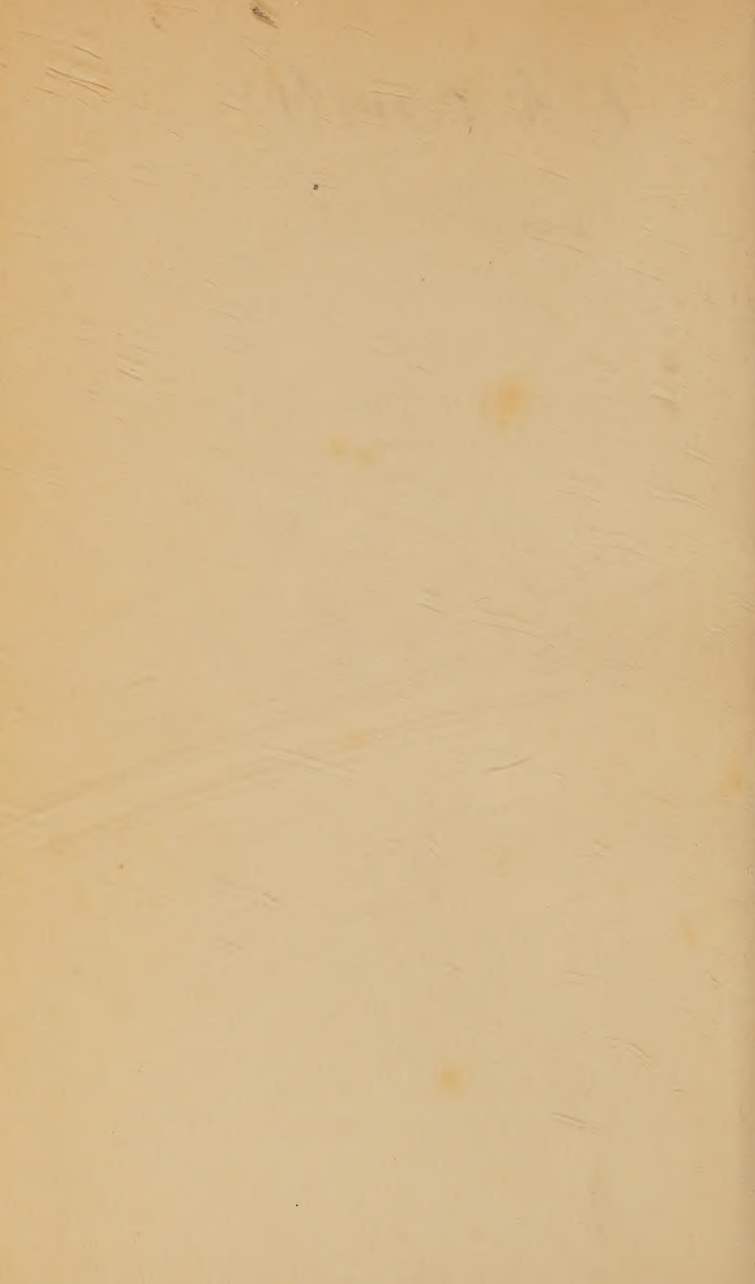




G. W. Cornell



Christian Foundations

An Introduction to Christian Doctrine

By

H. MALDWYN HUGHES, M.A., D.D.

Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge

Author of 'The Theology of Experience.'

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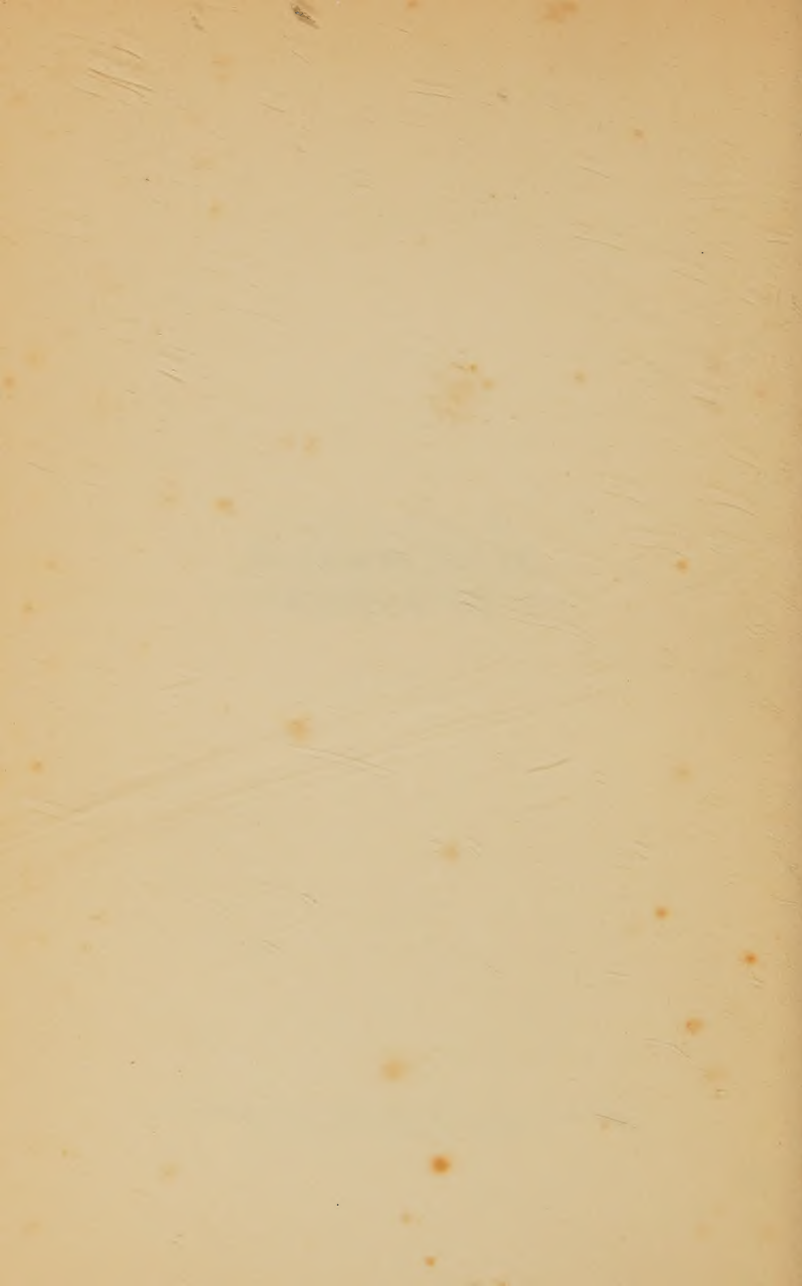
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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS volume has been written at the joint request of the publisher and of the Connexional Local Preachers' Committee of the Wesleyan Methodist Church for the use of local preachers and candidates for the Ministry. But while it is written primarily for these, it is hoped that it may also be of service to others. The author has endeavoured to transcend the purely denominational point of view and to present an outline of Evangelical theology.

The task has not been an easy one. The need for compression and simplicity, and for mediation between the old and the new, in a limited space, has imposed obvious limitations upon the writer.

Local preachers are advised to omit the sections in the smaller type, at any rate on a first reading. Candidates for the ministry are recommended to read the whole. Readers should have a Bible at hand, and should look up the passages to which reference is made.

A list of books for further study has been appended. The books have been chosen with a special view to the needs of the constituency for which the volume is written. Price and size have, necessarily, been weighty factors in determining the selection.

The author gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to his wife, who has compiled the Index of Scripture Passages, and to his friends, Dr. S. Cave, Principal of Cheshunt College, and Dr. Ryder Smith of Richmond College, who have made valuable criticisms and suggestions. But he alone is responsible for the opinions expressed.

CAMBRIDGE, *January* 1927.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE changes in this edition are slight and are entirely verbal. It is hoped that the Synopsis of Contents now included will add to the utility of the volume. For this I wish to express my indebtedness to Rev. W. S. Kelynack, M.A.

CAMBRIDGE, *September 1927.*

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

ADVANTAGE has been taken of the need for reprinting thoroughly to revise this edition. Some omissions and some additions have been made and there has been some rearrangement of materials in the chapters dealing with the Holy Spirit and the Church. But there is no change which affects the fundamental teaching of the book. I have done my best to meet the criticisms both of reviewers and of private correspondents. Some of the latter have expressed a desire for simplification. I have done what I could to meet their wishes, but obviously there are limits to what is possible in this direction. Some ministers have taken the volume as a text-book for classes and study-circles, and that is the best method of study for the less advanced student. The material in small type should be omitted on a first reading.

It is very important that readers should have a Bible at hand and should look up the passages to which reference is made.

I have revised the list of books for further study. Some volumes which were included in the earlier list are omitted because they are out of print.

H. M. H.

July, 1933

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Christian Foundations

CHAPTER I

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

THEOLOGY is concerned with the knowledge of God. How do we know Him or anything about Him? How do we know that there is a God? Philosophers have developed proofs¹ by which they have sought to establish the existence of God. It has been held that:

(1) Because we have an idea of a Perfect Being (that is, God) therefore that Being exists. (*Ontological* argument.)

(2) Everything must have a cause sufficient to account for it. Therefore the universe must have a sufficient cause, and this can only be found in God. (*Cosmological* argument.)

(3) As there are traces of order and design in the world, there must be an infinite Designer, that is, God. (*Teleological* argument.)

(4) Man has never been able to rid himself of the inward imperative 'I ought.' This is satisfactorily accounted for only if there be a God of whose mind and will it is the expression. (*Moral* argument.)

¹See Appendix p. 250.

These 'proofs' have been subjected to searching criticism. What they do, in effect, is to establish the fact that apart from belief in God, it is wellnigh impossible to conceive of the universe in which we live as rational and moral. Faith's instinct is to seek the support of the Reason. These 'proofs' are Reason's response to the demands of Faith. Reason cannot conclusively prove the existence of God, but it can corroborate the findings of Faith and bear witness that they are reasonable. These proofs are not the source of Faith; but they may serve to confirm Faith: Faith does not say 'God is; therefore, I will strive to know Him,' but, 'I know God, and live in fellowship with Him; therefore He is.'

The certainties of the religious life are confirmed not by argument, but by *experience*. By this term we mean our consciousness of divine action within us, and its fruits in knowledge, belief, feeling, and conduct. We must interpret the word experience here in a large sense, as applying to the facts of the moral and religious life, not merely of the individual, but of the race, and particularly to the growing consciousness of God which has characterized the Christian Church. What happens in actual life is not that men begin with the quest of an intellectual certainty of God, and then endeavour to attain to a knowledge of His nature, but that first of all they meet with God in prayer, experience a strength which is not their own in times of temptation and are conscious of 'a power not themselves making for righteousness'; then they proceed to examine these experiences and to ask themselves whether they are self-deluded or are really in communion with a God who actually exists. And that

should be the order of Theology, if it is to be true to the facts of the religious life. We start, then, with the knowledge of God. How is it attained? Theology's answer is by *Revelation* and *Inspiration*. God can only be known as He makes Himself known. Man can only think God's thoughts as God Himself kindles them within him.

I. REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

Revelation may be defined as God's impartation of the knowledge of Himself; Inspiration as the divine quickening of man's faculties so as to enable him to apprehend and to communicate this knowledge. Revelation and Inspiration are both facts of experience. Our belief in them is not a deduction¹ from any principles which are taken for granted, but is the result of an induction from individual and collective experience. The knowledge of God would be unattainable, if He did not will to reveal Himself. Knowledge of God is knowledge of a Person, and persons are only known as they disclose their minds and hearts and wills to us. Our knowledge of one another is pure guesswork except as it is based on the revelations of ourselves which we give to one another by word and deed. We know best those with whom we enter into the most intimate communion. It is so with the knowledge of God. We apprehend His being and His nature not by speculation, but by observing His action in human history, and by listening to the many voices with which He

¹ Deduction is argument from a general law to a particular instance. Induction is argument from particular instances to a general law.

speaks to us and within us. Those know most of Him who live in closest fellowship with Him. Revelation is therefore both *outward* and *inward*. It is *outward* because, through the whole course of history, we can trace the working of God, and because at certain epochs there have been special manifestations of Him, which have provided new starting-points for religious thought and life. It is also *inward*, through the inner experience of persons and groups of persons. The energizing of God within us in response to prayer and quest for the truth is an unassailable fact of consciousness, and produces a quickening of the faculties, a widening of the moral and spiritual horizon, and an accession of knowledge, which are as real as the phenomena of our outward life. Inspiration is the divine quickening of our faculties whereby we are able to apprehend and to communicate new knowledge of divine things. Revelation (in the sense of that which is revealed, as distinct from the process of revealing) is the content of this knowledge. The chief advances in the knowledge of God have come through outstanding personalities. The prophetic souls, who outstrip their fellows in the thirst for God and in intimacy of fellowship with Him, are the pioneers who lead the way. They declare to their comrades the things which they have seen and heard on the mount, and, as their words gain acceptance, so does the knowledge of God advance. But the prophet has no authority save that which is inherent in his message. The people must follow him to the mount, and see what he has seen, if they are to believe.

How should I tell, or how can ye receive it?
How, till He bringeth you where I have been?

The greatest advance of all has come through Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son, and through those inspired men who, in the New Testament, have interpreted Him to us.

It is necessary to point out that there is no special faculty for the apprehension of Revelation. Faith is sometimes spoken of as though it were a separate faculty (an organ of spiritual vision), but this is a purely popular form of speech. Faith is rather a new attitude of all the faculties, as the result of which they are imbued with a new energy which transfigures them. As the electric energy makes the dead copper wire 'live,' and endows it with new potencies, so does Faith energize and transfigure all our powers of mind and heart and will. Reason and Revelation are sometimes set in opposition to each other, and are often held to yield results not easily reconciled with one another. It is, indeed, true that Christianity, which is an historic revelation, often takes us further than the reason can travel, but there is a deeper logic than that of the reason. In the sphere of friendship there is a knowledge which comes from communion and trust, and this is as real as that which is the result of purely rational processes. It is so with the knowledge of God and the truth which He reveals. The knowledge which is based on faith and love is true knowledge. Revelation is the content, or part of the content, of the reason of the God-inspired man.

We now proceed to consider Revelation in its chief historic forms.

II. THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS AS REVELATION

God has never left Himself without witness, and wherever there is religion, we find some degree of revelation. Religion is universal, and in one form or another persistently takes command of men, generation after generation. It is certain, however, that the various religions could never have survived the bitter disillusionment which would long since have possessed men, if they had been simply concerned with the quest of man for God, and had had no authentic word from God to declare. The impetus which has been given to the comparative study of religions, of late years, has led to a fuller appreciation of the elements of value in non-Christian faiths. The study of their sacred writings has discovered grains of gold in the clay. When the gold is flashed before our eyes, away from its environment of clay, we are apt to lose our sense of proportion, and to exaggerate the elements of revelation in the non-Christian religions. But the revelational value of a religion is not to be estimated simply by isolated passages in its scriptures, which may bear marks of inspiration, but by the conception of God which it gives to the people, and by its general influence on character and life. There is a wide agreement to-day that the non-Christian religions cannot be dismissed as 'false,' since with much error there are mingled genuine revelations of God.¹ But in the Jewish and

¹ It should be noted, however, that these are discovered in so far as the light of Christ is cast upon them. More and more the non-Christian religions are testing their scriptures by the standard of the Christian ideal.

Christian Scriptures, revelation is an organic unity, and is on the whole progressive. It is mediated not merely by the illumination of individuals, but by the discipline of a people. The revelations are not sporadic and unrelated, as is usually the case in the non-Christian scriptures.

III. THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION

The Christian holds that Revelation reached its climax in Jesus Christ. All other revelations (more especially that of the Old Testament) were preparatory to Him, and were but broken lights of Him. He is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. i. 15); to behold Him is to see the Father (John xiv. 9) and in Him are 'all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge hidden' (Col. ii. 3). He is the 'Word of God' (John i. 1), the revelation and embodiment of the Divine Thought. God is revealed, not only in the record of the words and works of Jesus, but in His Personality with His filial consciousness.

The Christian knows God *through Christ* and he tests every statement or experience concerning God by this standard. Christian theology when it pursues the right method, is Christo-centric. Its task is to make explicit that which is implied in the Person and Work of Christ. Christianity establishes Revelation on concrete historical ground and unveils God in the fact and the acts of a transcendent Personality, as well as in the outworkings of history and in the experiences of the inner life of the Church and of individuals.

IV. THE BIBLE

The Bible is the record of the Christian Revelation. In the Old Testament we see the gradual development of that revelation which was directly preparatory to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which is contained and expounded in the New Testament. The Bible is *the* book of revelation. No dogmatic theory is needed to express the distinction between it and the non-Christian scriptures, and none has ever been propounded by the Church. The Bible establishes its supremacy and proves its uniqueness by its own appeal to the soul of man and by the response which it awakens. The dominating thought which, like the red thread in the Alpine climber's rope, runs through the whole of the biblical revelation is not merely the illumination of the mind, but the redemption of the soul. The Bible is the book of redemptive revelation.

It is important to keep clearly in mind the distinction between *Revelation* and the *record* of revelation. The revelation is greater than its written record, as the spirit transcends the letter. The Christian revelation lives and grows and is not finally fixed and stereotyped in any writings. The Word of God, which is 'living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword' (Heb. iv. 12), is God's personal and active revealing and redeeming energy which has always operated 'by divers portions and in divers manners,' and is still expressing itself in many different ways and embodying itself in many different forms. We shall be saved from excessive literalism in our interpretation of the Scriptures if we remember that the Word of

God is the Revealer and the Revelation, shining through the words in which the record has been written.

V. THE CANON

The Bible consists of a collection of books which religious faith has marked off from other literature, and to which it has attached a special authority. These books are said to constitute the Canon (=rule) because they are accepted as our supreme Rule of faith and practice. The Canon consists of two parts—the Old Testament and the New. The Canon of the Old Testament was gradually formed by the Jewish Church, and that of the New Testament by the Christian Church. The following points should be noted:

(1) Neither Canon is the result of conscious purpose to produce one, either on the part of individuals or of communities. Neither Old Testament nor New Testament writers wrote with the expectation that their writings would be treated as canonical.

(2) Both Canons were formed as the result of a gradual process in which the general religious consciousness played a determining part. In neither case were the limits of the Canon determined by a divine command, or by the decree of a Council, but by the gradual consensus of religious people. This consensus was, of course, not arrived at without reflection, e.g. it was a weighty consideration in the case of the Old Testament if a book was supposed to

come from the hand of some famous person such as Solomon or David, and, in the case of the New Testament, if a book was held to be written by an apostle. Councils when they pronounced on the question did not do so with a view to imposing agreement, but to register an agreement which had been already widely reached.

(3) The fact that the books of the Bible have gained their present authoritative position largely because of their appeal to the moral and spiritual consciousness has a bearing upon the method of their interpretation. The Christian consciousness is both illumined by and is the interpreter of the Bible.

VI. THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

What is the quality which the books of the Bible possess which has caused them to be set in a class apart? The answer is *Inspiration*. The word is, perhaps, commonly used rather loosely, but it is intended to convey two ideas. In the first place, the Bible is a record of revelation, and secondly the biblical writers produced the record under divine guidance and constraint. The Scriptures contain the story of the progress of revelation, along its main line, from Abraham to Jesus Christ. They unfold before our eyes the experience of a people that was set apart and trained to become both the recipient and the exponent of a larger revelation than was vouchsafed to the mass of mankind. They conserve for us the inspired intuitions and utterances of prophet, saint, and seer, and show us how, stage by stage, Israel advanced in the

knowledge of God. Above all, they contain the record of the culmination of the long process of revelation, in Jesus Christ, set before us a living portrait of His potent Personality, recount His wonderful words and works, and testify to His transforming influence on the thought and life of His early followers. If the Bible were nothing more than a text-book of religious history, it would have a unique value. But it is more than that. It is the product of *inspired* writers. It is not the outcome merely of travail of intellect, but men spake (and wrote) from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. i. 21).

Experience has shown that it is impossible to frame a rigid definition of the term inspiration as applied to the Scriptures. The great Councils of the Church never attempted the task, and there is no Catholic dogma of inspiration. It is enough to state in general terms that the writers wrote under divine constraint and guidance. They worked on materials of a unique character, and were endowed with the special illumination and insight and power of expression necessary to set forth these materials as revealing the nature and will of God. This does not mean that they were simply mechanical instruments, who wrote automatically at the dictates of the Spirit. Mechanical and verbal theories of inspiration are rejected almost unanimously to-day, both on psychological grounds and because they do not harmonize with the facts, such as the peculiarities of style of individual writers, differences of statement by different writers concerning the same facts, and divergent accounts of the same words and incidents (e.g. the differences in the Gospels).

Indeed, even if the verbal inspiration of the original Scriptures were admitted, its significance would be greatly impaired for practical purposes, if the authority of every translation were not also assured by the same guarantee. The characteristic of biblical inspiration is not the suspension or the supersession or the mechanizing of the ordinary human faculties, but their quickening and their direction by the indwelling Spirit of God. This does not involve immunity from all error. It is, of course, not to be expected that inspiration for moral and religious purposes should confer scientific or philosophic or historical infallibility. And, even in the religious sphere, it is to be expected that, because man is a personality and not a machine, the personal factor cannot be ignored, in the words of even inspired speakers and writers. Perhaps the nearest approach to a satisfactory description of that which is distinctive in the inspiration of the Bible is that of Dr. Sanday, who held that 'it consists in the peculiar energy and intensity of the God-consciousness apparent in the writers.'

VII. PROOFS OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

The books of Scripture are not authoritative because they are in the Canon; on the contrary, they are in the Canon because of the authority which they wield. The following considerations offer cumulative evidences of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

(1) When the Christian Scriptures are compared with those of the non-Christian religions, the transcendent

inspiration of the former is immediately manifest. Any one who has even a superficial acquaintance with the Sacred Books of the East, or the Koran, knows how immensely the Bible surpasses them in the positive contents of its moral and spiritual revelation, and in its degree of freedom from those base conceptions which deface the non-Christian scriptures.

(2) Coleridge expressed the general experience of the Christian consciousness when he wrote, 'In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all books put together, and the words of the Bible find me at a greater depth of my being.'

(3) Students of the Bible are impressed with its unity of spirit and purpose. Although consisting of books written by many different individuals of varied endowments and standpoints, during a period extending over many centuries, they do in a real sense constitute one Book. Deeper than all differences (and the differences are often by no means superficial) is the underlying movement towards a Redeemer and redemption which they embody and represent. As Augustine said, 'The New Testament is implicit in the Old; the Old Testament is explicit in the New.'

(4) It is almost startling to find how largely we are dependent upon the Bible for our knowledge of God. As a matter of fact, even when we have admitted that revelation is not limited to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, we have to confess that we have comparatively little knowledge of God, apart from that which is derived from the Bible. If (as may be hoped) this generation has a nobler and worthier conception of God than its predecessors, it is largely because it is

better equipped for the interpretation of the Scriptures. So far as non-Christian religions are concerned, let it be remembered that the Bible is influencing every religion in the world, and is transfiguring and transforming their ideas of God.

(5) The inspiration of the Bible is attested by its influence on the lives of individuals and nations, and by its power to satisfy man's many-sided needs. It is significant of the appeal which it makes to the heart that the Bible has been translated into nearly six hundred tongues. Wherever it is read and obeyed it revolutionizes human thought and life and lifts them to higher levels.

Discussions as to whether the inspiration of the Bible differs in kind or only in degree from that of the great masterpieces of literature are largely a strife of words, and are barren of results. It does not follow that, because a difference cannot be completely defined with verbal accuracy, it is non-existent. Three things may, however, be said. In the *first* place, there is a marked difference in the material out of which the two sets of writers have fashioned their works. *Secondly*, in the case of the New Testament writers, their nearness in time and place to the source of the historical revelation gives them a peculiar authority. They wrote of that which they had heard, that which they had seen with their eyes, that which they beheld and their hands handled, concerning the Word of life (1 John i. 1). *Thirdly*, when the masterpieces of literature exercise the same redemptive influence as the Bible it will be time enough to question the uniqueness of the biblical revelation and inspiration. If, in reply to this, it is advanced that *The Pilgrim's Progress* and

The Imitation of Christ and other similar works have exercised a redemptive influence, the answer is that they owe their inspiration to the Bible.

VIII. REVELATION IS PROGRESSIVE

The Bible is the record of an ever-growing and widening revelation. It is not the product of one age, but of many centuries, during which Israel advanced from stage to stage in the knowledge of God. Suppose we were to make a book of selections from our national literature, from the seventh century down to the nineteenth century, beginning with Cædmon's *Song of Creation* and ending with Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. There might conceivably be unity of theme and purpose throughout the book, but, to read it intelligently we should have to bear in mind the age in which each part was written. To interpret Cædmon on the supposition that his knowledge was as great and his vision as wide as Tennyson's would be to go astray. So it is with the Bible. The Old Testament is the record of a progressive and preparatory revelation of God to Israel, of the gradual spiritualization of the people's conception of Him, and the slow ennobling of their moral standard and ideals. When this is remembered, what are called the 'moral difficulties' of the Old Testament lose their force. We are no longer under an obligation to defend crude conceptions of God, or to justify actions which an immature religious knowledge attributed to Him. We learn to distinguish between God, and man's thought of God at the different stages of his growth, and we cease to charge God with what is

to be attributed to the undeveloped ideas of man. We do not realize the full grandeur of the Bible, nor can we fathom its deepest treasures, until we view it as a progressive revelation of God, advancing resistlessly in face of every obstacle to its triumphant culmination in Jesus Christ.¹

IX. DEGREES OF INSPIRATION

If the view of inspiration and revelation here set forth be true, it will be seen that all parts of Scripture are not equally inspired. No one would attribute the same measure of inspiration to Esther or the Song of Songs as to the Gospel according to St. John. These considerations, together with those advanced in paragraph VIII., show how misleading it is to build up systems of doctrine by choosing texts indiscriminately from all parts of the Bible and attributing to them all the same value.

X. THE BIBLE AND THE 'HIGHER' OR 'LITERARY' CRITICISM

By the 'Higher² Criticism' is meant the investigation of questions which relate to the authorship, date,

¹ By this it is not meant that all great ideas came strictly in the order of time. The development was *in the main* progressive, but some great ideas emerged at an early stage (e.g. Abraham and Moses).

² The word 'higher' does not, of course, signify *superior* in this connexion. 'Criticism in its earliest stage took the form of text criticism. When, at a more advanced stage, it entered upon the inner study of Scripture, it called itself "higher" in order to distinguish itself from the criticism of the text as a "lower" or preparatory form of study' (Nash: *The History of the Higher Criticism*, pp. 12 f.).

place of origin, integrity, and historical trustworthiness of the books of the Bible. For the sake of clearness, a few illustrations will be given. In some cases criticism has gone behind the books as we have them to-day, and claims to have discovered the documentary sources out of which they were composed (e.g. in the case of the Pentateuch in the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels in the New Testament). Sometimes points of similarity are noted between a biblical narrative and one in extra-biblical literature, and the question of the possible dependence of one on the other is investigated (e.g. critics have compared the Genesis Creation-story with the Babylonian Epics of Creation). Again, books are examined with a view to discovering whether they are a unity or have more than one author (e.g. Isaiah and the Psalms) or have been subjected to interpolation at any point. Or they are investigated with a view to estimating the evidence in support of their alleged authorship, and in order to ascertain as nearly as possible the order and the circumstances in which they were written (as in the case of the Prophets and the Epistles of Paul). Or an effort may be made to determine their historical trustworthiness, by comparison with other historical sources (non-biblical writers, monuments, and papyri) and with other books of the Bible (e.g. the books of Chronicles are compared with the books of Kings, and St. John's Gospel with the Synoptics).

It must be admitted that this and kindred methods of study are legitimate, if reverently pursued, unless we make for the Bible the impossible and indeed injurious claim that it be exempt from all literary and historical scrutiny. The authority of the Bible

rests on wider and deeper foundations, when it is seen to emerge from this process of criticism unimpaired in its revelational and inspirational value. If criticism had discredited the biblical history of the progressive revelation of God through Israel, then the authority of the Old Testament would be undermined. But that has not happened. It is one thing to cause us to revise some of our historical estimates and notions; it is quite another to discredit the history. If, again, it can be shown that the Bible has drawn upon the wisdom of Babylon or Persia or Greece, that only shows that it is a richer storehouse than we knew and that it gathers to itself and expresses, in purer and more spiritual forms, truths which have come to men through many channels. The Bible, which is essentially the word of Truth, has nothing to fear from the discovery of the truth concerning itself.

But it is necessary to sound a caution against abuse of the rights of criticism.

(1) Some critics have approached the Bible with an anti-supernaturalistic¹ bias. They discredit in advance anything of the nature of a supernatural revelation. They dismiss as legend or myth everything which transcends the limits of their thought or experience. It need hardly be said that they are as unscientific as are the advocates of verbal inspiration.

(2) In formulating his conclusions, the critic relies on both *external* and *internal* evidence. In many cases the external evidence is very scanty, and he is

¹ By this is meant the belief that we are shut up in a closed universe—a universe 'with no outlook into or links with anything beyond, uninfluenced by any life or mind except such as is connected with a visible and material body.'

compelled to rely to a large extent on internal evidence. It is obvious that a wide field is opened up here for the operation of purely subjective factors, and both the critic and his reader must be on their guard.

(3) The critic of the Scriptures is not adequately equipped for his task unless he has at least some understanding of and sympathy with religious experience. This does not mean that his methods must be unscientific, but that to scholarship and judgement he must add a knowledge of God. How can a scholar do justice to the writings of the great prophets if he has himself no experimental knowledge of God? Who can hope to make a just estimate of St. Paul who has not himself a living experience of Jesus Christ?

XI. THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN THEOLOGY

The Scriptures are the source of Christian doctrine for the reasons which have been given. But the theologian must be careful to make a right use of the sources, and must not treat the books of the Bible as a single source, the different parts of which are of equal value and authority. The Bible is the record of an ever-widening revelation and not an armoury of proof-texts providentially designed for the dialectical use of theologians. The Bible is not to be regarded as a statute-book, but as the vehicle of spirit and life. The following considerations should be borne in mind:

(1) In using the books of the Bible for theological purposes, we must take account of their chronology.

Our theology will be unscientific unless we remember the progressive character of revelation.

(2) In formulating *Christian* theology, we must recognize the primacy of the *New Testament*. The whole biblical revelation is to be interpreted in the light of Christ. Only that is authoritative for Christian thought which harmonizes with the self-revelation of Jesus Christ. This is not to discount other parts of the Bible. They all fall into place in the long and gradual preparation for the coming of Christ.

(3) We must distinguish the distinctly Christian element from other elements in the New Testament. If, for instance, a writer gives expression to ideas which are known to have been an integral part of contemporary Judaism, but which find no echo either in the teaching or in the spirit of Jesus Christ, then it is a fair presumption that these ideas are but the writer's thought-forms and are no part of the essence of the Christian revelation.

(4) The Bible must not be treated as embodying a closed system of truth.¹ A living revelation is bound to grow and to refuse to be stereotyped even in sacred writings. Our Lord Himself stated that His revelation was incomplete, and would be continued by the living Spirit of Truth (John xvi. 12 f.), who is the Interpreter of Christ in every age (John xvi. 14).

¹ By this it is not meant that the Canon is not rightly closed, but that later developments which derive from New Testament teaching and draw out further its implications are legitimate.

NOTE A

THE CANON¹

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament Canon was formed in three stages: 1. The Law; 2. Prophecy and History; 3. The Hagiographa (Holy Writings), consisting of the rest of the Old Testament as known to us to-day.

1. THE LAW

The Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was formally promulgated by Ezra (Neh. viii. 1) probably soon after 397 B.C. But the process of canonization can be traced farther back than this. Most of the materials out of which the Pentateuch was fashioned were probably known and revered long before the time of Ezra. What he really did was to promulgate authoritatively the Pentateuch, substantially in its present form.

2. PROPHECY AND HISTORY

The impulse thus given to the canonization of sacred writings did not stop at the Pentateuch. It was applied to the writings of the Prophets especially when the voice of prophecy ceased to be heard in the land. This group (consisting of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets) probably gained canonical authority by the end of the second century B.C., though we know of no formal and official act of canonization.

3. THE HAGIOGRAPHIA

(Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles.)

The Rabbis seem to have regarded this section of the Canon as closed about A.D. 100, although probably it was closed in the popular mind much earlier.

There is a difference between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Canons of the Old Testament. From the fifth century A.D. Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible, known as the Vulgate, held the field. This contained the books found in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible). The Canon of the Septuagint, being closed later than that of the Hebrew Bible, other writings crept into the Septuagint in addition to those of the Hebrew Bible.

¹ Canon is a Greek word signifying a measuring-rod or rule. Christian doctrines were based on the Scriptures which were regarded as the *Canon*. The earliest record we have of the use of the word in this sense is that of the council of Laodicea (A.D. 363) which enacted that 'No psalms of private authorship can be read in the churches, nor uncanonical books, but only the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments.' A book is therefore held to be canonical if it has a place among the Scriptures recognized as authoritative by the Jewish or Christian Church.

These books, together with 2 Esdras, constitute what is known as the Old Testament Apocrypha, and formed an accepted part of the Bible of the Church from the fifth century till the Reformation. Luther rejected them, partly because they are not in the Hebrew Bible, but mainly on doctrinal grounds. They are, however, of very unequal value. As to the Apocrypha, the sixth article of the Anglican Church says, 'And the other books the Church doth read for example of life, and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.' Up till 1827 English Bibles were commonly printed with the Apocrypha. The Greek Orthodox Church uses the Septuagint. The Apocrypha is therefore included in the Bible of the greater part of Christendom, but it is hard not to believe that the Reformers were rightly guided in excluding it from the Canon.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT

Westcott traces three stages in the growth of the New Testament Canon:

1. 70-170, the period of the separate circulation and gradual collection of the Sacred Writings.
2. 170-303, the period which completes the history of their separation from the mass of ecclesiastical literature.
3. 303-397, the period which comprises the formal ratification of the current belief by the authority of councils.¹

A natural demand arose in the early Church for Christian documents which might be read in Christian meetings, side by side with the Old Testament Scriptures. These documents gained in authority as the apostles and their immediate disciples and all who might be termed 'eyewitnesses' passed away. Special authority was attributed to such writings as were deemed to be of apostolic authorship. The tendency to appeal to the authority of sacred writings was emphasized by the rise of heretical bodies which made appeal to writings which they themselves regarded as authoritative. Thus the Early Christian Writings found each its place by a process of natural selection. By the end of the second century, with the exception of Hebrews, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, James, Jude, and Revelation,² all the books of the New Testament are acknowledged as apostolic (that is written by apostles or those who knew the apostles) and authoritative throughout the Church. Westcott³ says that 'this result was obtained gradually, spontaneously, silently. There is no evidence to show that at any time the claims of the apostolic writings to be placed on an equal footing with those of the Old Testament, which formed the first Christian Bible,

¹ *The Canon of the New Testament*, p. 15.

² While these books were not universally received, they seem to have been in most cases rather unknown than rejected. Only in the case of the Apocalypse was there any controversy. They were universally accepted by the fourth century.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 355.

were deliberately discussed and admitted. . . . Slow experience and spiritual instinct decided the practical judgement of the Church.' On the other hand, Harnack—*The Origin of the New Testament* (1925), p. 100—says, 'The selection of works, the structure of the collections, and the titles of the books assure us that in the New Testament as it stood at the end of the second century, we have before us a compilation that indeed grew up naturally out of the history of the Church of the second century, but only reached its final form through conscious purpose.' 'We may declare with great probability that the moulding of the collection of books of the New Covenant into a relatively closed Apostolic-Catholic Canon, with its characteristic structure, is the work of the Roman Church' (p. 106 f.). 'The Canon of twenty-seven books, as we still have it to-day, is the Canon of the Alexandrian Church of the third century, but its nucleus is the New Testament as it was created about A.D. 200 in Rome' (p. 113). But there is no real conflict between the views of Westcott and those of Harnack. The latter does not deny the operation of the gradual, spontaneous, and silent process of which the former speaks. If his contention be true, all it means is that Rome, with its practical genius, took control of tendencies that were already operating and made them serve the ends of the Catholic Church.

The Third Council of Carthage, A.D. 397, ratified the New Testament Canon as it at present stands.

NOTE B

THEORIES OF INSPIRATION

The *fact* of the inspiration of the Bible has been universally held in the Church, but there has been no universally authorized and accepted *theory* of the mode in which inspiration operated. Some of the early Fathers, such as Justin, held that the Biblical writers were passive, like a flute in the hands of a musician. Origen protested against the theory of passivity and regarded inspiration as illumination of the writer's mind as far as was necessary for the purpose in hand, but this illumination was not held to be incompatible with errors in language. The school of Antioch (Diodorus of Tarsus, 394; Chrysostom, 407; Theodore of Mopsuestia, 429; Theodoret, 457) recognized a real operation of the Holy Spirit in the sacred writers, but held that it was of such a nature as not to obliterate the characteristics of the individual writers. Augustine compared the apostles with hands which noted down that which Christ, the head, dictated.

But there are other passages which seem to imply a less mechanical theory. Augustine grasped the important principle that, for an adequate understanding of the Scriptures, the reader must be in a measure inspired by the Spirit of God, that is, his heart must be pure and he must be in sympathy with the writer. But on the whole, from the fourth century onwards, the theory of verbal inspiration

gained ground, and even when it is not asserted is generally implied. The Scholastic Theologians seem to have given little attention to the question of Inspiration. But Abailard, who was usually in a minority, is found asserting the possibility that the Apostles and Prophets may have erred.

It was not till after the Reformation that the question of the nature of the inspiration of the Scriptures became acutely controversial. Both Luther and Calvin recognize the Scriptures as the supreme court of appeal, though they admit degrees of inspiration. Luther distinguished between the Bible and the Word of God, that is, between the record of the revelation and the revelation itself. By 'the Word of God' he meant the Gospel of God's forgiving love in Christ, and he found this in most parts of the Bible. As a result he frequently used the words Scripture and Word of God as though they were synonymous, with unfortunate results in the case of his successors. Calvin refused to argue about theories of inspiration. He held that the authority of the Scriptures is established by the witness of the Spirit. 'The same Spirit that spoke by the prophets must enter our heart to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message which He gave them.' The Scriptures 'came down to us by the instrumentality of men from the very mouth of God.' But he shows that he is not entirely emancipated from the theory of verbal inspiration, when he says, 'There is this difference between the apostles and their successors: they were sure and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit.'

The successors of the Reformers under pressure of controversy against the idea of the 'infallible Church' appealed more and more to the 'infallible Book,' and increasingly lost sight of Luther's distinction between the Scriptures and the Word of God. In their hands the Bible became an armoury of proof-texts. It was asserted that the writers were dependent on the Spirit for their very words, and the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* (1576) extended inspiration even to the vowel-points of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The verbal theory of inspiration has died hard in the Protestant world, but has now, for the most part, made way for what is called the *dynamical* theory. This theory cannot be stated with precision. It is perhaps enough to say that inspiration is conceived of as standing 'in the closest relation to the capacity, experience, and mental endowments of the individual and the circumstances of his age.' Emphasis is laid, too, on the distinction between the Word of God and the Bible, i.e. between the revelation and the record of the revelation. The record is rarely or never a perfectly adequate vehicle of revelation. The Word of God recorded in the Bible is discerned and apprehended by those who are illumined by the Spirit of God. It is no longer claimed that the Bible is inerrant in such matters as those of science and history; indeed, a particular passage is not necessarily inerrant even in matters of faith and morals. Each passage is to be interpreted in the light of the age in which it was written; and so interpreted it finds its place in the process of revelation.

CHAPTER II

JESUS CHRIST

JESUS CHRIST is central in Christian theology. Who and what was He? There is hardly any other theological subject around which so much controversy has centred, and concerning which there has been such diversity of view. There is something about His personality which baffles us. Every attempt to interpret Him in purely human terms has failed. That He lived in history in the first century of our era is certain. Our knowledge of Him is derived almost entirely from the New Testament, and especially from the Synoptic Gospels. It should be added, however, that the faith in Him as Lord to which the New Testament bears witness is confirmed by the experience of the Church.

A. THE WITNESS OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

(a) *Jesus Christ was human.*—The close and exact study which has been devoted to the Synoptic Gospels of recent years has confirmed beyond all possibility of doubt the traditional belief of the Church in the reality of the humanity of Jesus. He was a man who shared our human limitations in all respects, with the important

exception that He was free from sin. (cf. Luke ii. 52, Matt. iv. 1-11, Luke xxii. 28, Mark iv. 38, xi. 12, xiii. 32.)

- (b) *Jesus Christ was more than human.*—When we have sought to explain Jesus Christ in terms of the most perfect humanity, there yet remain elements in His Person which are unexplained and which we are bound to characterise as ‘more than human.’ Among them are the following:

I. JESUS’ RELATION TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom which He proclaimed is not merely an ideal human order, it is the Kingdom of *God*—to be established by God and to be ruled by God. Anyone who claims to be the Mediator of this Kingdom must also claim to stand in a unique relation to God. Does Jesus claim to be the Mediator of the Kingdom? He says that His works are a proof that the Kingdom of God has arrived. ‘If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you’ (Matt. xii. 28). So closely is He identified with the Kingdom that the expressions ‘for My sake’ and ‘for the Kingdom of God’s sake’ have the same significance, and are used interchangeably. Where Mark reads ‘for My sake and for the gospel’s sake’ (x. 29), Luke reads ‘for the Kingdom of God’s sake’ (xviii. 29). Again our Lord associates Himself with the fulfilment of Messianic hopes, even in passages where the Kingdom is not directly mentioned, but its phenomena are indicated. ‘But blessed are your

eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not' (Matt. xiii. 16 f.; Luke x. 23 f.). Unless the Gospels are discounted as wholly unreliable, it is impossible to dismiss the witness of Christ's consciousness that He stood in a special relation to God and to the fulfilment of His purpose to the world.

The position which He conceived Himself as holding in the Father's purpose is further illustrated by the following passages. He says to John the Baptist, 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me' (Matt. xi. 6). He opposes His 'I say unto you' against the commandments of the Old Testament (Matt. v. 44). He asserts that the position taken up towards Him is decisive for all eternity. 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven' (Matt. x. 33). He demands that men shall leave their kindred for His sake (Matt. x. 37 f.). He claims that He has power to forgive sins (Mark ii. 10). He demands faith in Himself (Mark v. 34), and He says, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away' (Mark xiii. 31).

II. THE FILIAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF JESUS

Jesus conceived of Himself as standing in a filial relationship to God, and that not in the sense that all men are sons of God, but in a unique sense. The words spoken at the Baptism and Transfiguration 'Thou art my beloved Son' (Luke iii. 22) and 'This is

my Son, my Chosen' (Luke ix. 35) reflect the inner consciousness of Jesus. Whatever their exact meaning may be, they clearly imply that Jesus was conscious of standing in a special filial relation to God. This connexion also finds expression in the words 'All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father, and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto Me' (Matt. xi. 27 f.).

A study of the titles which our Lord applied to Himself is not very fruitful, as there is so much doubt as to their precise meaning. A word may, however, be said as to the title by which He most frequently designated Himself—the Son of Man.¹ In the Book of Enoch² the Son of Man is a pre-existent, supernatural being, standing in a pre-temporal relation to humanity, and destined to come on clouds of glory as Messiah and judge of men. This was, perhaps, the starting-point of our Lord's use of the term. But, as then understood, it was inadequate to express His full sense of vocation. He poured into the 'Son of Man' mould the contents of the 'Suffering Servant' idea. When He spoke of the sufferings which awaited Him, He always referred to Himself as the Son of Man. He practically identified the Son of Man of Enoch with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah when He said, 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered

¹ Some scholars hold that in the non-eschatological passages where it occurs, Son of Man simply means Man, and that in the eschatological passages Jesus did not identify Himself with the Son of Man who was to come in power and glory. It is impossible to discuss these points here. The present writer can only say that he finds the arguments for both positions quite unconvincing.

² The germ of the 'Son of Man' idea is to be found in Dan. vii. 13, where it stands for the glorified righteous Israel.

unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many' (Mark x. 45).

III. THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS

Sinlessness is a negative term which denotes freedom from sin. But it is not so that it is applied to Jesus Christ. He was not merely free from sin; He had within Himself the fulness of more perfection. This is a quality unparalleled in any other member of our race in all history and cannot be explained merely in terms of human perfection. 'It is vain to speak of Him simply as different from others in degree; the difference is one of type. It is a new and lonely type of spiritual consciousness, an unshared relation of identity with the Father. Divinity is here the source and basis of perfect manhood.'¹

From such considerations it is clear that, according to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus regarded Himself as standing in a unique filial relation to God and to the fulfilment of His purpose to mankind.

B. THE WITNESS OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

Most scholars do not attach the same degree of authority to this Gospel as to the Synoptic Gospels, because they hold that it is an interpretation of the words of Jesus rather than a literal record of them. But even so, we cannot afford to undervalue the evidence of one who had so manifestly the mind of Christ. In this Gospel the ideas of 'eternal life' usually

¹ Mackintosh: *The Person of Christ*, p. 404.

takes the place of that of the Kingdom. To partake of eternal life is the same thing as to be a member of the Kingdom. The supreme mediator of eternal life is Jesus Christ. 'This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ' (xvii. 3). 'He that believeth hath eternal life' (vi. 47). 'He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgement, but hath passed out of death into life' (v. 24). Our Lord's witness to His own filial consciousness, which we have already found in the Synoptic Gospels, has even clearer testimony borne to it in the Fourth Gospel. Here Jesus is not so much the holder of a divine office as the sharer of the divine nature. He is the Son (v. 19), and He is pre-existent (viii. 58). He and His Father are one (x. 30). He knows God, because He is from God and is sent by Him (vii. 29). He knows whence He comes and whither He goes (viii. 14). The relation in which He stands to God is thus expressed: 'The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing: for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth. . . . For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom He will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath given all judgement unto the Son; that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent Him. . . . For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life

in Himself: and He gave Him authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of Man' (v. 19-27).

Jesus, therefore, conceives of Himself as the Supreme Mediator of God to man. His person is absolutely central to the Christian message. He is the Light of the World (viii. 12). He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (xiv. 6). He is the Bread of Life (vi. 35), the Resurrection and the Life (xi. 25). His death is the condemnation of the world, and strikes a death-blow at the power of evil (xii. 31). All judgement is committed to Him (v. 22). There is no greater beatitude for the disciple than to be with Christ (xiv. 3, xvii. 24).

When we consider all the evidence drawn from the Gospels, we ask how we are to interpret a Personality who bore to Himself and to whom the evangelists bore such a witness as this. Obviously He cannot be confined within the bonds of our humanity, real as was His participation in our human nature and life. Even if the Fourth Gospel be left out of account and our attention be centred on the Synoptics, it can be shown that 'the Jesus-research, acknowledging but a purely human life of Jesus, comes to the conclusion either: We know next to nothing about Jesus, or Jesus was a religious enthusiast.'¹

'The former of these two positions is not in harmony with our most definite knowledge, viz. that there was a growing community shortly after the death of Jesus which highly revered Jesus, and which must, therefore, have had a lively interest in His words and deeds. The latter does not agree with the impression which

¹ That is a mistaken dreamer who supposed that He was coming again in power and glory on the clouds in the first generation of believers.

the deepest, and, therefore, the genuine words of Jesus make upon us. But if neither of these two views, which are the only consistent ones, is tenable, then the error must lie in the assumption . . . that His life was a purely human one.¹

But, it may be asked, why attach so much importance to the witness which Jesus bore to Himself? We do not usually place much reliance on men's estimates of themselves. The answer is twofold: (a) The general impression of sanity produced by Jesus, and His moral influence on history, are not compatible with mental abnormality; (b) There is no claim which He makes for Himself which is not attested by the evangelists. The Synoptics, quite assuredly as the Fourth Gospel, witness to the fact that His disciples believed Him when He spoke of the unique relation in which He stood to God. How, then, are we to interpret Him? To use modern terms, does He stand on the human or on the Godward side of reality?² To explain Him by means of Messianic categories does not carry us very far, because in Judaism there was no certainty as to whether the Messiah was to be human or super-human. So firmly were the disciples convinced that Jesus transcended the purely human that His resurrection seemed to them to be the natural corollary of His life (Acts ii. 24).

C. THE WITNESS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The first disciples did not hesitate to put Jesus Christ on the Godward side of reality. It must be

¹ Loofs: *What is the truth about Jesus Christ?* pp. 188 ff.

² J. Denney: *Jesus and the Gospel*, p. 373.

admitted that such a term as 'Son of God' was ambiguous in its meaning. The word 'God' was used in a very loose sense in the Graeco-Roman world. The heavenly bodies were regarded as gods. Men such as Romulus and Augustus were deified. But in Judaism monotheism was strict and rigid, and the idea that a man could be raised to divine honours could not thrive for an hour in that soil. The Jews distinguished clearly and emphatically between the Creator and the creature. 'Nor was it at all within the compass of the contemporary Jewish imagination that God should manifest Himself in human form. Doubtless there had been, in old days, theophanies. God, they read in the Scriptures, had manifested Himself, as it appeared, even in human form to men. But these were momentary epiphanies; they had long ceased; and the later theology had explained them away. There was no tendency of thought among the Jews of the time after the Captivity such as would have led naturally towards an idea of incarnation.'¹ The Alexandrian Jew, Philo, earlier than the Fourth Evangelist, had written of the Logos, or Word of God. But 'to Philo . . . it would have appeared an inversion of all values, whether religious or metaphysical, that the Evangelist should have dared the tremendous assertion, "The Logos became flesh and dwelt among us."'²

Yet, to the earliest Christian community, Jesus was an object of faith and worship. 'History, indeed, does not know of any community in those primitive times that saw in Jesus merely the teacher and exem-

¹ Gore: *Belief in Christ*, p. 11.

² Kennedy: *Philo's Contribution to Religion*, p. 177.

plar of Christian faith.¹ From the very beginning the term Lord (*Kurios*)² is applied to Jesus (Acts i. 21) —the term which is used for the divine name in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is recorded that Stephen died 'saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' (Acts vii. 59). It is implied throughout the Acts that Christians prayed to Christ (ix. 14, 21, xxii. 16). From this it is clear that the earliest Christians conceived of Jesus Christ as being on the Godward side of reality.

D. THE WITNESS OF PAUL

Paul brought out clearly the identity of the Jesus of history with the heavenly Christ. The reader must be referred to books on biblical theology for a detailed summary of Paul's teaching on the Person of Christ. It must suffice here to point out that to Paul, Jesus Christ is One who is to Christians in their inner life what only God can be. This thought runs through all his epistles. Christ is 'Lord of both the dead and the living' (Rom. xiv. 9). He is the 'image of the invisible God' (Col. i. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 4). 'Being in the form of God, (He) counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men' (Phil. ii. 6 f.). The apostle goes still further, and teaches that Christ's functions are cosmic. He is associated with the

¹ Loofs: *op. cit.*, p. 148.

² The term 'Lord' was also used to designate the divinities of the mystery-religions. But the Christian usage was not derived from this source (though it may have been stimulated thereby); it was derived from the Old Testament.

Father in the work of creation. 'There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things' (1 Cor. viii. 6). 'In Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, . . . all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' (Col. i. 16 f.) He is to judge the world. 'We must all be made manifest before the judgement-seat of Christ' (2 Cor. v. 10). It is the purpose of God 'to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth' (Eph. i. 10). There can be no question that Paul conceives of Jesus Christ as standing on the Godward side of reality. The passages which we have quoted represent not merely theological propositions, but the spontaneous utterances of faith. Whatever may have been the differences between Paul and the older apostles, there is no evidence that any were Christological. By bringing the heavenly Christ into a coherent relation with the historical Jesus, Paul saved Jewish Christianity from becoming a mere reform-movement in Judaism. His emphasis on the superhuman aspects of the Person of Christ precluded the possibility of His being regarded merely as a prophet or rabbi who had suffered for the truth.

Moreover, by setting Christ forth as standing in so essential a relation to God, Paul saved the Gentile Christian Churches from polytheism, from regarding Jesus as another god or demi-god more or less like the pagan gods.

E. THE WITNESS OF THE EPISTLE TO THE
HEBREWS, AND I PETER

Throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews the pre-existence of Christ is assumed (ix. 26). He is the 'effulgence' of God's glory, and the 'very image of His substance,' and He upholds all things by the word of His power (i. 3). He is the 'first-born' Son of the Father (i. 6). Moreover, no New Testament writer sets forth more clearly Christ's subjection to human limitations. But the Jesus of history and the eternal Christ are one and the same. 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever' (xiii. 8).

The First Epistle of Peter teaches that the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ (i. 11). 'Christ was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times' (i. 20). The word 'foreknown' does not necessarily imply pre-existence. It might mean no more than that Christ existed in the divine mind from eternity. But when we are told that the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, and that Christ was *manifested* at the end of the times, pre-existence seems to be the inference. Christ could not have been manifested unless He had previously existed. The idea is not that the pre-existent Spirit came upon the man Jesus, but that it was Christ Himself who was manifested in human form. 'More and more the historical is being fused with the eternal.'¹

¹ H. R. Mackintosh: *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 46.

IV. THE JOHANNINE WITNESS

The Fourth Gospel, the First Epistle of John, and the Apocalypse are generally held to have come from the same hand, or at any rate from the same circle. According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus Christ is the Word who has been eternally with God; indeed, He is God (i.). He was the Agent in creation, and from the beginning He has been the life and light of men. 'The Word became flesh' (i. 1-15). Hereafter the author drops the term 'Word' and uses the term 'Son.' Jesus Christ is 'the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father' (i. 18). Though in the flesh and on earth, He has not abandoned His eternal relationship to God. In the First Epistle of John, too, Jesus Christ is described as the Word of life which was from the beginning, and has been manifested unto men—the Word of life who is the Son of the Father (i. 1-4). 'He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also' (ii. 23). 'Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him' (iv. 9). 'He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life' (v. 12). In the *Apocalypse*, Christ is described as 'the Alpha and the Omega' (xxii. 13), the same terms being applied to God in i. 8 and xxi. 6. He is the 'Lamb' who shares God's throne (xxii. 1). He is 'King of Kings, and Lord of Lords' (xix. 16).

V. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

As we have seen, there is no Christological controversy among the New Testament writers. The earliest Christians were not conscious of any contradiction between the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. They believed in the reality of His Manhood, and they also thought of Him as a divine being who had descended into humanity. But the question was bound to arise, How could the divine and human thus unite in one personality? It is this question which constitutes the great problem of Christology. Three solutions were offered at a very early date.

(1) Before the New Testament was completed, *Docetism* appeared. It was held that the human body of Jesus was a phantom. The Son of God did not really come in the flesh; He only appeared to do so (cf. 2 John 7). Ignatius¹ refers to the 'godless men' who assert that Christ suffered 'in phantom only.'

(2) *Adoptianism*. Some of the Jewish Christians (*Ebionites*) held that Jesus was a man who was adopted as Son of God, when the Spirit descended on Him at His baptism. This view reappeared in Adoptianist Monarchianism (about A.D. 200).

(3) *Cerinthus* (end of first century A.D.) taught that Christ was a heavenly aeon, or emanation, who descended on Jesus at His baptism, fitted Him for His Messianic vocation, and left Him before His crucifixion, since the heavenly Christ could not suffer.

But these solutions were all held to be heretical, and the growing consciousness of the Church grappled with the problem.

I. First of all the task was faced of expounding and defining the divinity of Jesus Christ. There are three main lines of thought to be noted before the promulgation of the Nicene Creed.

I. MODALIST MONARCHIANISM

There was a natural anxiety to preserve the divine unity, which seemed to be threatened by the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. Sabellius (c. A.D. 220) and others taught that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are but different aspects, or manifestations, of the one God. Thus it was the Father Himself who suffered on the cross. For this reason this view is sometimes called *patripassianism*.

2. THE LOGOS DOCTRINE

The Alexandrian school sought to interpret Jesus Christ by means of the Logos (Word) conception. The two great names are Clement

¹ Ignatius (d. about A.D. 110) calls Christ 'God,' and none of the early believers, even those who were heretics, said that Christ was 'merely a man.'

and Origen. According to *Clement* (A.D. 150-212), the Logos is God Himself immanent in the world, and fully incarnate in Jesus. He says 'the Logos of God became man that thou mayest learn from man how man may become God.' (*Protrept. I. 8*). It is the fact of the incarnation that is important to Clement, rather than the personality of the historic Jesus Christ. Salvation is through the union of the human and the divine. Jesus came to show us the way.

Origen (A.D. 186-254) saw the danger that the Logos might be regarded as a mere emanation, and he emphasized the fact that the Word is personal, and used the term Son as synonymous with Logos. He taught the *eternal generation* of the Son, and so prepared the way for Athanasius. But, inasmuch as he stressed the subordination of the Son, he also prepared the way for Arius.

3. ARIANISM

Arius attempted a mediating line of thought. Christ was the Son, but He had a beginning before all time, and was the mediator of creation. He was the Logos created by God, who took the place of the human soul in Jesus. Christ was, therefore, neither God nor man, but a demi-god.

The answer of the Church, led by *Athanasius*, to these and other speculations, is embodied in the original *Nicene Creed* (A.D. 325). Jesus Christ is declared to be 'only-begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,' &c.

This creed does not define the relation of the human to the divine in Jesus Christ, but it carefully defines His deity in terms which aim at ruling out the heresies of Arius and Sabellius.

II. As was natural, attention was now turned to the relation of the humanity to the divinity in Jesus Christ. Some of the critics of the Nicene Creed said that it represented Jesus Christ as having two personalities. There was a growing consciousness of the need of showing that there was a real unity in His person.

I. APOLLINARIS

Apollinaris (d. A.D. 390), Bishop of Laodicea, met the difficulty by denying that Christ had a complete human nature. He held that in Jesus Christ the eternal Logos took the place of the human mind. Although this teaching was adjudged heretical, Apollinaris anticipated the ultimate verdict of the Church, in that he taught that the human nature of Jesus Christ was impersonal, and that the centre of His personality was in the Logos or Word.

2. NESTORIANISM

The theologians of the school of Antioch (*Theodore of Mopsuestia*, *Theodoret*, and *Chrysostom*) asserted the existence in Christ of two natures, one perfectly human, the other perfectly divine, conjoined yet distinct. But *Nestorius* (Bishop of Constantinople, 428-31) was blamed for teaching which left the unity of the Person doubtful. This was not true of Nestorius himself, but his name has been given to those who held that the bond between the two natures in Jesus Christ was a purely moral bond.

3. EUTYCHIANISM

Eutyches (c. A.D. 450) declared that there was only one nature in Jesus Christ—the nature of God become flesh; that all human attributes must be transferred to the one Subject, the humanized Logos, the deified Man; and that thus only could God become capable of suffering and death. 'I confess our Lord to have become out of two natures before the union. But I confess one nature after the union.'

The Church sought to compose these differences in the *Creed of Chalcedon* (A.D. 451).

4. THE CREED OF CHALCEDON

'We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably, the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one person, and one substance, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy Fathers has been handed down to us.'

This definition practically ended the controversy for many centuries; but not entirely. Attention must be drawn to:

(1) *The Monophysite controversy* in the East. This was a recrudescence of Eutychianism. The controversy ended with the Fifth General Council, held at Constantinople in 553. According to its decrees, the two natures are distinguishable only in theory. 'We think that whilst each nature remains what it is, the Word has

been united with the flesh. Therefore, also, there is one Christ, God and man, the same who is of one substance with the Father as to His Godhead, and of one substance with us as to His manhood.' It was held that the human nature of Christ was impersonal.

(2) *The Monothelite controversy.* In the sixth century there broke out a controversy in the East as to whether Jesus Christ had one or two wills. The Sixth General Council (Constantinople, 689), formally condemned the doctrine of one will. The representatives of the East accepted what was the Western doctrine. It was held that the two wills harmoniously co-operated, the human will following the divine. *John of Damascus* (700?-753?), one of the great theologians of the Greek Church, defined the doctrine of the Council. Following the lead of Leontius of Byzantium (485-543), he held that the relation of the human to the divine nature in the unity of the person was *Enhypostatic*.¹ The manhood of Christ was not hypostatic (i.e. personal) in itself, yet not without a hypostasis as it exists in the hypostasis of the Word. It is the human nature only as it is before it becomes a personal individual.

It will be convenient to summarize here the conclusions reached by the end of the seventh century—conclusions which constitute the Catholic doctrine of the Person of Christ.

5. SUMMARY OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

1. Christ is the Son of God by eternal generation.
2. He became incarnate, and lived a real human life on earth.
3. His Person was constituted of two natures, one divine, the other human, each distinct from the other, yet forming one Person. But He had two wills, the human will always following the divine will.
4. His Personality, as distinct from His Person, was divine. That is, His ego, while in the flesh, was the divine Word, the only begotten Son of the Father.
5. The human nature of Jesus Christ was impersonal, or perhaps, more correctly, it found its hypostasis in the divine Son.

6. LUTHER

Luther faced the problem, not as a speculative, but as a religious question. He emphasized that the Person of Christ cannot be separated from His work, and that only the redeemed can confess Him as Son of God. He recognized the presence of the two natures, and admitted that the human nature was impersonal, but for him the two were fused into a unity, and he could not view them apart. Some of the Reformers made much of the ancient formula *communicatio idiomatum*—that is, the view that in consequence of the communion of natures, the properties of each of the two natures are communicated to the other, and to the whole person.

¹ That is, the human nature of our Lord found its hypostasis (or personality) in His divine nature.

Faustus Socinus (1539–1604) denied that Christ was divine, but held Him to be more than man. He accepted the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, but denied the doctrine of the 'Two Natures.' Before entering on His ministry, Jesus was taken up into heaven and learnt what to teach. He is Son of God by adoption.

There has been a great renewal of interest in, and discussion of, the subject of Christology from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The following are the main factors which have been operating to stimulate thought in new directions:

7. MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

(1) THE GROWTH OF SCIENCE. The scientific method has been applied to theology. The theory of evolution has been brought in to explain the development of religion and also the emergence of unique personalities.

(2) THE DEVELOPMENTS OF PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY. These affect conceptions of revelation, the idea of God, and the concept of personality. The doctrine of the two natures is approached in the light which philosophy and psychology throw upon personality.

(3) THE GROWTH OF LITERARY CRITICISM. The records have been closely scrutinized, and an effort made to re-discover the historical Jesus, and to ascertain, as far as may be, the nature of His inner consciousness. The witness of the early disciples has also been closely examined.

(4) THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RELIGIONS. The phenomena of Christianity have been compared with those of other religions. Christianity has been viewed in the light of its Jewish and Hellenic environment, and in that of all the religious ideas with which it may be supposed to have come into contact. The influence of these ideas in shaping Christology has been taken into account, and has been variously estimated.

The following are some of the chief lines of interpretation which have emerged:

1. THE PURELY HUMAN INTERPRETATION

In Germany during the nineteenth century a radical attempt was made to interpret the story of Jesus Christ in purely *human* terms. But, as we have seen, this presupposition does not do justice to the records, and the argument is generally recognized to have broken down. The 'more than human' element is so woven into the warp and woof of the Gospels that it cannot be eliminated without leaving the documents in a hopeless state of mutilation.

2. THE MYTHOLOGICAL THEORY

The failure of the 'Liberal' School to dissolve the 'more than human' elements in the Gospels has led some writers to take refuge

in a denial of the historicity of Jesus, and in a search for the source of Christian doctrine in mythology. Some, who do not deny the historicity of Jesus, turn to mythology for an explanation of Christology. This theory is now generally recognized to have completely broken down. The evidence for the historicity of Jesus is too strong to brook denial. And the evidence is strong that the germs of the Nicene Christology are present in the earliest strata of the New Testament, and are not to be traced to later mythologizing tendencies.

3. THE IMMANENCE THEORY

The interpretation of the Person of Jesus Christ in terms of *immanence*. It is held that the divine is in some measure inherent in all men, and that in Christ manhood has been filled with the divine to its utmost capacity. But it is doubtful whether this theory is adequate to N.T. teaching. Moreover immanence is a conception quite different from incarnation.

4. PROGRESSIVE INCARNATION

It has been held that the Incarnation was not consummated in one moment of time, but that the Word was ever more and more joined to the perfect Man until at last union was complete and indissoluble. The two natures are united by moral or mystical bonds. But to conceive of the human and divine in Jesus Christ as two persons, united by moral or mystical bonds, does not solve the problem of the unity of the Person.

5. DOCTRINES OF KENOSIS

(or *self-emptying*)

These are based on Phil. ii. 5 ff. There are frequent references to this idea in the writings of the Fathers, but the chief developments of the theory are modern. It has been developed as the result of the desire to state the doctrine of the two natures in such a way as to guard the reality of the human nature without denying the reality of the divine nature in Jesus Christ. The records make it clear that in some respects our Lord shared our human limitations. Modern conceptions of personality make it difficult for us to accept the view of a double consciousness in Him, whereby He knew some things as God, but was ignorant of them as man. It is therefore held that the eternal Son on His incarnation voluntarily underwent a process of Kenosis, or depotentialization, or self-emptying. This theory has taken many different forms. For instance, a distinction is drawn between the *essential* attributes (absolute power, absolute holiness and love, absolute truth) and the *relative* attributes (omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence) of the eternal Son. The incarnate Son retained the essential attributes, but parted with the relative. Or a distinction is drawn between the *physical* attributes (omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence) and the *ethical*

attributes (truth and love) of the eternal Son. Self-emptying meant the surrender of the physical attributes.

It is obvious that incarnation, to be real, must involve a measure of self-emptying. As Bishop Gore has said, 'The Son of God, without ceasing to be God, the Son of the Father, and without ceasing to be conscious of His divine relation as Son to the Father, yet in assuming human nature, so truly entered into it, as really to grow and live as Son of Man under properly human conditions, i.e. under properly human limitations. . . . By the voluntary action of His own self-limiting and self-restraining love, He did cease from the exercise of those divine functions and powers, including the divine omniscience, which would have been incompatible with a truly human experience.'¹ But to attempt to advance beyond a general statement of this kind is perilous. It is to describe events and processes in the eternal life of God of which we have no knowledge, but for which we draw on our imagination.

6. RITSCHLIANISM

Ritschl² led a protest against the over-intellectualization of theology. He rejected the Christology of the creeds as being too speculative. His fundamental Christological thesis was that we know Christ only through what He has done for us. He asserted that Jesus Christ has the value of God. Further than that he declined to go, and he refrained from all speculation. But, the human mind being what it is, the question cannot be left there, as the history of Ritschl's followers in Germany abundantly proves.

7. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL THEORY

This theory was popularized in England by Schweitzer's book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, in which it is held that Jesus was simply the prophet of the coming Day of the Lord, who taught that He Himself would come with power and glory on the clouds of heaven, as Son of Man, at an early date. He proved to be mistaken, but His great idea remains that the salvation of the world depends on the breaking in of the superhuman order upon the world order. It is recognized by most scholars that Schweitzer and others have rendered a service in bringing into the foreground eschatological elements in the teaching of Jesus which were long overlooked. But it is equally agreed that to explain everything in terms of eschatology is to fail to do justice to elements in the gospel record which are as vital a part of it as the eschatological teaching.

8. THE 'MYSTERY RELIGION' SCHOOL

According to scholars of this school, Jesus was a prophet who died a martyr's death, and the supernatural features of the Gospels are to be ascribed to the first believers. After His death, His disciples

¹ *Dissertations*, p. 94.

² An influential German theologian (1822-89).

in the Gentile communities called Him 'Lord,' after the manner of the mystery religions, and this title carried with it the associations of their former cults. On this basis Paul developed a doctrine of Jesus as Lord. In this way Jewish and Greek ideas of religion were synthesized, and the foundations of Catholic theology were laid. But this theory involves the repudiation, on insufficient grounds, of large elements in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. There is a good deal of evidence for the contention that Jesus was first called Lord, not in Gentile, but in Jewish circles.

9. THE EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

The category of evolution has been applied to the Person of Jesus Christ. It is held that the consciousness of Jesus is to be explained in the light of His cultural inheritance. There was in Him an originality of thought which was selective and evolutionary. He thus became the creator of something new in the history of religions. Jesus was actualized ideal man, man at the end of his evolution, complete—not that the manhood had been deified, nor yet again dehumanized, but in virtue of its constitution it was *capax Dei*.¹ He is God incarnate, because He holds as much of God as human nature at its best can hold. But the theory, while containing undoubted elements of truth, cannot easily be brought into harmony with the teaching of the New Testament.

In a brief summary of this kind it is not possible to refer to other contributions to the Christological discussion, which is still going on.

The following are the basal facts which the study of the historical revelation leads us to accept, and in the light of which a satisfactory doctrine of the Person of Christ may be constructed.

I. THE UNITY OF HIS PERSON. There was one consciousness and one will. That is the impression produced by the gospel narrative. No other conception can be harmonized with the modern view of personality.

2. THE REALITY OF HIS HUMAN NATURE. The witness of the New Testament is clear. He was a Man among men, subject to real temptation, yet He was sinless (in the positive as well as the negative meaning of the word).

¹ That is, able to hold God.

3. HE WAS MORE THAN MAN. He had the consciousness that He stood in a unique filial relation to God. The early disciples identified Him with the Logos, or Word of God, and with the Son of Man, both of which conceptions implied the idea of pre-existence. The incarnation, therefore, necessarily involved some kind of Kenosis, or self-emptying.

These, difficult as they may be to harmonize, are the materials for the construction. But the faith of the Christian man does not depend on the solution of this speculative problem. There are deep realities of history and experience, the constraining witness of which cannot be withstood. In the first place, it is through this Man, Christ Jesus, that we know God as a living, loving, and redeeming Reality. Christian thought hardly distinguishes between Christ and God. The two terms are used as though synonymous. This is not so much a finding of theology as an immediate utterance of faith.

Secondly, the highest moral and spiritual values which the mind of man can conceive all derive from Jesus Christ. He is the Revealer of these values, and not only the Revealer, but their Fountain and Source. He gives them vitality, and clothes them with an authority which cannot be gainsaid. And inasmuch as God is the source of all good, the conclusion follows that Jesus Christ is one with God.

Finally, those theologians must be heard who have maintained that the Person of Jesus Christ ought to be interpreted in the light of His work. As Luther said, 'Christ is not named Christ because He has two natures. What meaning has that for me? But He bears His lordly and comforting names because of the office

and work He has taken on Himself.' To speak of Jesus Christ as Lord means that 'He has redeemed me from sin, from the Devil, from death and all misfortunes. . . . The little word *Lord*, taken in its simplest sense, means as much as Redeemer; that is, He who has led us back from the Devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and holds us safe.'¹

These are the transforming realities which constrain the Christian man (even while the speculative problem awaits solution) to say, 'My Lord, and my God,' 'God of God, Very God of Very God.'

¹ See Cave: *The History of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, pp. 140 f.

NOTE A

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

When Christian apologists relied mainly on external proofs for the defence of the doctrine of the deity of Christ, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of our Lord was held to be of first importance. But now that emphasis is placed rather on what Christ *was* and *did*, this doctrine does not seem to be of such paramount importance. A distinction must be drawn between the doctrine of the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. According to the former, the eternal Son of God assumed our human nature; according to the latter, He became man by being born of a virgin. But the doctrine of the Incarnation does not depend for its truth upon the reality of the Virgin Birth. It is surely an excess of dogmatism to assert that the Son of God could become incarnate only by one particular method. There is no reference to the Virgin Birth in any of the epistles of Paul, or, indeed, in any of the New Testament epistles. It is possible to hold the fullest faith in the Incarnation apart altogether from this doctrine. Paul (so far as we know) expounded the Lordship of Christ to his converts without seeking support in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, and it may be doubted whether this doctrine has ever occupied a large place in the preaching of the gospel. The Virgin Birth is only believed by those who already accept the reality of the Incarnation, and it would be useless to seek to persuade any one to accept the former who did not already accept the latter. In the nature of the case, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth cannot be verified in experience like some of the cardinal doctrines of the faith.

The question must, therefore, be considered dispassionately in the light of the evidence, and without any of those prejudices, arising from a false asceticism, which have sometimes characterized Christian apologists.

There are some who trace the doctrine of the Virgin Birth to the influence of pagan mythologies.¹ But they do not allow for the striking superiority of the gospel narratives in delicacy, reserve, and spirituality over those stories which are supposed to resemble them. On close examination, the resemblances are generally seen to be outweighed by the differences. Moreover, the Birth stories in Matthew and Luke come from the earliest Jewish sources, i.e. from those who would be far more likely to reject mythology than to accept it.

For a discussion of the textual evidence the reader must be referred to the books on the subject (e.g. Vincent Taylor: *The Historical Evidence for the Virgin Birth*). John (probably), Paul and the

¹ It is often overlooked that the cases quoted from the mythologies are usually those of supernatural beings who were moved by human passions. In these cases generation took place in the usual way.

writers of the other epistles are silent on the subject, and when Matt. i. 18 and Luke i. 35 are compared with other passages their evidence seems to be shaken. We must, therefore, see what light we can gain from other considerations.

1. The argument from congruity certainly tells strongly in favour of the truth of the story. It is altogether congruous that the entrance of the Son of God into the world should be in a unique manner. The miracle of the Virgin Birth is far less significant than the miracle of the Incarnation. It is easier to believe in the Virgin Birth because we believe in the divinity of Christ than vice versa.

2. What is the relation of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth to that of the Person of Christ? Does faith in the Lordship of Christ depend to any extent upon the reality of the Virgin Birth? This is the crux of the question. If the Virgin Birth is untenable on other grounds, it must not, of course, be defended in the interests of doctrine. But if the verdict on the textual evidence is 'not proven' (as it seems to be), and if there should not appear to be any vital issues at stake, then the Church may come to feel that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is not worth defending. But may it not be that the explanation of the tenacity with which the Church has clung to the story of the Virgin Birth is to be found in the fact that she has realized, half-consciously perhaps, that there are fundamental doctrinal issues involved?

(1) The Virgin Birth has been held to be a guarantee of the *sinlessness* of Jesus. It is said to break the entail of the past. The obvious objection to this argument is that if Jesus had no human father, He none the less entered into the inheritance of His mother.

(2) A real incarnation of a pre-existent Being seems to demand a new beginning. Professor Bethune-Baker has suggested the following possible line of argument. 'The doctrine, as I understand it, requires continuity with the human race, which is secured by birth from a woman—heredity through the mother—and at the same time a break in the continuity of the ordinary, natural process, a fresh departure, a new divine action, the introduction of a new divine power into the world, which is secured by conception, without human paternity, by the direct action of God. The catholic doctrine presupposes the pre-existence of Him who was born as man into the world, and I cannot myself conceive how a child, born of two parents in the ordinary course of nature, could be what I believe our Lord to be—the fullest expression of divine Personality that is possible under the conditions of genuinely human life, the embodiment of God in man. Accordingly, when I reason out the doctrine of the Incarnation, I am, for my part, almost constrained to hold belief in a miraculous birth alongside with my belief in Him of whose Personality I think that doctrine is a true interpretation. The one belief is congruous with the other' (*The Miracle of Christianity*, 1914, pp. 10 f.). Dr. Bethune-Baker, however, adds, 'But I am not satisfied with such an answer.' None the less, the force of the

argument remains for other minds. [Dr. Bethune-Baker has stated the reasons why this answer does not satisfy him, in *The Faith of the Apostles' Creed* pp. 89-92.]

NOTE B

THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EMPTY TOMB

For a discussion of the evidence for the Resurrection of our Lord the reader must be referred to monographs on the subject (e.g. J. M. Shaw: *The Resurrection of Christ*) and to works on apologetics. There are those who hold that it is a matter of no moment whether the tomb was empty, so long as we are assured that 'Jesus lives.' Harnack, for instance, holds that the 'Easter message' must be distinguished from the 'Easter faith.' 'The Easter message tells us of that wonderful event in Joseph of Arimathea's garden, which, however, no eye saw; it tells us of the empty grave into which a few women and disciples looked; of the appearance of the Lord in a transfigured form—so glorified that His own could not immediately recognize Him; it soon begins to tell us, too, of what the risen one said and did.' But 'the Easter faith is the conviction that the crucified one gained a victory over death; that God is just and powerful; that He who is the first-born among many brethren still lives.'¹

Harnack holds that the Easter message is an 'unstable foundation for the Easter faith.' What is of importance is not that the tomb was empty (or otherwise), but the impression produced by Christ on His disciples, whereby they were convinced that death could not hold Him. The purpose of this note is to draw attention to the theological significance of the empty tomb, by which is, of course, implied the physical resurrection of Jesus.

1. It is difficult to see how the impression produced by Jesus on His disciples could have created the Easter faith, without any external verification. None of His disciples would doubt that His spirit had survived death, but that belief would not have sufficed to transform the shame of the cross into glory, or the sense of defeat into the rapture of triumph. That would not have been sufficient to justify them in hailing Christ as the conqueror of death and the grave. Only a bodily resurrection, with an empty tomb, could have given them the unconquerable assurance and invincible faith which enabled them to say that 'Death is swallowed up in victory' (1 Cor. xv. 54).

2. The alleged experience of communion with the living Christ can only be real if grounded on a confident assurance that He triumphed over death. We may experience communion with God apart from this, but unless there is an adequate historical basis

¹ *What is Christianity?* pp. 163 f.

(such as the empty tomb) for our faith that Jesus lives, when we speak of communion with the living Christ, we are simply using our imagination to transform communion with God into communion with Christ.

3. The empty tomb is a proof that our Lord's personality survived death in its integrity. It was not a discarnate, disembodied spirit with which the disciples held communion. In Paul's words, He was 'clothed upon' with the body of glory into which the body of His humiliation had been changed, without having seen corruption. The resurrection of Christ is an earnest that our personalities shall survive death in their integrity; that we, too, shall be 'clothed upon' with a spiritual body, related somehow (we know not how) to our body of flesh. Had Christ's body been left in the grave, the disciples would have mistaken the spiritual body on its appearance for a mere apparition,¹ and there would not have been born in them the assurance that He had survived death in all the fulness of His personality.

4. It was fitting, too, that by His resurrection our Lord should give a demonstration of the power of the spiritual over the material—a promise that, through the might of His power, the corruptible is destined to pass into the incorruptible.

¹ A ghost is to be defined, not 'as a dead person permitted to communicate with the living,' but 'as a manifestation of persistent personal energy, or as an indication that some kind of force is being exercised after death which is in some way connected with a person previously known on earth. . . . It is theoretically possible that this force, or influence, which after a man's death creates a phantasmal impression of him, may indicate no continuing action on his part, but may even be some residue of the force or energy which he generated while yet alive' (F. W. H. Myers: *Human Personality*, &c., abridged edition, 1919, pp. 189 f.).

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD

THERE is no more important question in the sphere of religion than What is God like? It is the business of Theology to supply the answer. The Christian answer is given in the light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. This implies a study not only of New Testament teaching, but of that of the Old Testament, because the former presupposes a good deal of the latter. The Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus and His teaching about God is based on what is highest and best in it. But the materials for the Christian doctrine of God are wider than the Scriptures. We have to take into account the work of the Spirit of Truth in guiding the minds of men through nineteen centuries. Jesus Christ is the supreme touchstone. There is no room in our construction for anything which does not harmonize with the spirit of the teaching of Jesus Christ.

A. OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING AS TO GOD

We are not concerned here with the various ideas of God which obtain in the Old Testament. They belong to the study of the religion of Israel. There are, of course, ideas in the Old Testament which

do not harmonize with the Christian revelation. They find their position in the history of the development of religious ideas, but they have no permanent place in religion. Our present concern is only with those great and abiding ideas which were taken over into Christianity.

I. GOD AS CREATOR

Two ideas of creation are presented in the Old Testament. (a) Genesis i., which probably teaches that the earth was created by God out of a pre-existent, watery chaos. (b) Isa. xl. 12-26, 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand? . . . Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these.' There is here no suggestion of a *primaeval* chaos. God is absolute Creator. 'I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am the Lord, that doeth all these things' (Isa. xlv. 6 f.).

2. THE PERSONALITY OF GOD

'The most distinct and strongly marked conception in regard to God in the Old Testament is that of His personality.'¹ The idea is sometimes obscured owing to varying causes, but it is steadily maintained through the whole of the Old Testament. God is the living God. 'God is the absolute personality, over against finite personalities, not absorbing personalities in Himself, not by His personality excluding personalities beside Himself.'²

¹ A. B. Davidson: *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 106.

² Davidson: *op. cit.*, p. 83.

3. THE UNITY OF GOD

The Old Testament tells the story of how Israel, beginning with a tribal deity, reached the belief in one God, supreme over heaven and earth. The prophets conceived of Jehovah as King of the whole earth. The revelation of the transcendent majesty of Jehovah left no room for the lesser gods. The first writer explicitly to deny their existence is the great prophet of the Exile whose prophecies are recorded in the second part of the book of Isaiah. 'Is there a God beside Me? Yea, there is no rock; I know not any' (Isa. xlv. 8). But this utterance was the culmination of a process which had long been apparent. Amos and Isaiah had spoken with contemptuous scorn of the 'other gods,' and had declared their faith that Jehovah determined the destiny of nations other than Israel. Jeremiah had said, 'The Lord is the true God; He is the living God, and an everlasting King. . . . The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens' (Jer. x. 10 f.).

4. THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD

Despite anthropomorphic¹ ideas, the dominant conception of the Old Testament is that of God as spiritual. Unceasing warfare is waged with idolatry (Exod. xx. 4; Deut. iv. 15 f.; Isa. xl. 18 ff.).

5. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

(I) HOLINESS. In its original sense, this word does not express a moral quality; it represents rather

¹ That is, fashioned according to human modes of thought.

those qualities of the divine nature which produce awe in man—‘majesty,’ ‘augustness.’ Gradually the idea gained some moral content, but it was expressed ceremonially rather than ethically. At first holiness suggested separateness and remoteness. But ‘as knowledge of God became truer, His holiness was more and more identified with His moral excellence, offered to men as the standard and inspiration of goodness.’¹ The Divine holiness is the characteristic theme of Isaiah’s prophecy.

(2) **RIGHTEOUSNESS.** This is essentially ethical, and is never attributed in the Old Testament to any other god than Jehovah. The righteousness of God is the consistency of His character as seen in His dealings with Israel and in the moral order of the universe. Righteousness is that in God which corresponds to the sense of right that is implanted in human nature. But the Old Testament writers never set the divine righteousness and mercy in opposition to one another. God’s saving activity, no less than His judgement, is a manifestation of His righteousness. ‘Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful’ (Ps. cxvi. 5).

(3) **GRACE OR LOVE.** God’s motive in His dealings with Israel is love. ‘There is no antithesis between righteousness and grace. The exercise of grace, goodness, forgiveness, may be called righteousness in God.’² ‘When Israel was a child, then I loved him. . . . I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love’ (Hos. xi. 1–4). God’s love for Israel is but a particular manifestation of His love and

¹ W. N. Clarke: *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 96.

² Davidson: *op. cit.*, p. 134.

long-suffering to the whole world. Israel is called to be the agent of His redemptive purpose to all mankind. 'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth' (Isa. xlix. 6). This is Old Testament religion at its highest, it is true, but it was these elements in the Old Testament that Jesus Christ made His own.

(4) God is almighty (Gen. xvii. 1; Job xiii. 3; Ezek. i. 24), all-knowing (Ps. cxlvii. 5), and all-present (Ps. cxxxix.).

B. NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING AS TO GOD

The New Testament throughout assumes the Old Testament background which we have outlined above.

I. THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Jesus did not come announcing an entirely new doctrine of God. His God is the God of the Old Testament (Matt. xxii. 31), especially the God of the Prophets. Of course, this does not mean that He accepted everything that is taught about God in the Old Testament. There are many Old Testament ideas which cannot be reconciled with the thought of God as the universal Father. None the less, it is true that the movement of revelation in the Old Testament reaches its crown and culmination in Jesus Christ.

In formulating a doctrine of God to-day, it is almost impossible to avoid a reference to science and metaphysics, but Jesus concerns Himself only with the

religious and practical doctrine of God. His concern is not to give men a doctrinal formula concerning God, but to give them a living knowledge of Him, in His relation to man. He uses the terms of His own day, and each generation must relate the teaching of Jesus to the structure of its own thought.

We must bear in mind that in the background of Jesu's thought concerning God are those elements of Old Testament teaching to which we have drawn attention. The question now arises, What was there distinctive and characteristic in the teaching of Jesus concerning God? It may be summed up in His ascription of Fatherhood to God. The great theme of His preaching was the Kingdom of God, but it was the Father's Kingdom that He proclaimed, and He seldom spoke of God as King. Fatherhood as interpreted by Him includes all the highest attributes of Kingship. God is the Sovereign-Father. Jesus was not the first to call God Father. He is so described in the Old Testament in His relation to Israel. All through the history of the chosen people He had dealt with them in a fatherly way. But it is not suggested in the Old Testament that God is (save in the sense of creatorship) the Father of all men. It is true that no passage can be quoted in which Jesus specifically makes the latter statement concerning God. Rather does He speak of God as His own Father, and the Father of His disciples. But the universality of God's Fatherhood is implied in all His teaching. He regards God as standing in a fatherly relation to all men, pouring out His gifts on all alike (Matt. v. 45), but did He regard all men as sons of God? The problem finds its solution in the distinction between the actual and

potential. Even His disciples are regarded as potential rather than actual sons of God. 'Love your enemies,' He said, 'that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven' (Matt. v. 44 f.). Man's potential sonship may become real and actual when he responds to the love of God. In the parable of the Prodigal Son the father is father all the time, but the youth in the far country is 'no son of his father' until he comes to himself, and responds to his father's love. Then his sonship becomes actual, and he enters into the moral relations and fellowship of a son. God's fatherhood is universal, but men *become* sons in so far as they fulfil the moral and spiritual conditions of sonship.

What is the connotation of the word Father in this connexion? Ritschl has pointed out that the distinctive New Testament name for God is 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' This means that the Fatherhood of God is to be interpreted in the light of the Sonship of Jesus. God is such an One as Jesus found Him to be in His filial consciousness. To Jesus, God was real. Fellowship with His Father was the very breath of His life. He presents His Father as being willing to enter into the most intimate and beneficent relations with all men. God's purpose of love to the race, and His providential care for the children of men, are to Him an axiom not admitting of question. God is perfectly good. The Father of Jesus has the ethical attributes of the God of the prophets, save that, in the thought of Jesus, God's grace seems to outshine all His other attributes. But as with the prophets, so with Jesus; God's love and righteousness cannot be viewed apart from each other.

It is not, however, in His teaching alone that Jesus reveals God. Rather is it in and through His personality. He has an undimmed knowledge of the mind of God. 'Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him' (Matt. xi. 27). His will is the reflex of the will of God. We may then say that *God is like Jesus*.¹ The ethical attributes of Jesus are the ethical attributes of God, because in all things He did His Father's will. Because Jesus faced the Cross in obedience to the will of His Father, it follows that the will to sacrifice is grounded deep in the nature of God. 'It is the Fatherhood of God relatively to Jesus which impressed most deeply the first generation of Christians. The spectacle of Christ's communion with God haunted them as the norm and type of what life ought to be, yet as something so far above what they, from their own resources, could realize, that they felt that only through continued association with Him could they maintain it. Whenever, therefore, they endeavoured to realize the divine Fatherhood, there rose up in their imaginations the Figure of the Son as they remembered Him; and so, too, when they remembered the Son, the spiritual heavens overhead became luminous and alive with the presence of the Father.'²

2. THE FOURTH GOSPEL

The teaching of Jesus about God as recorded in the Fourth Gospel is essentially one with that in the

¹ 'What does the life of Christ on earth teach us? The life of Christ on earth teaches us what God is, and what man ought to be' (*Wesleyan Catechism*, p. 5).

² Cairns: *Christianity in the Modern World*, p. 49.

Synoptics, but differs in form. 'God is spirit' (iv. 24). No man has seen God (vi. 46), but He is manifested in Jesus Christ. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father' (xiv. 9). 'If ye had known Me, ye would have known My Father also' (xiv. 7). That is, the Fourth Evangelist joins with the Synoptists in witnessing that *God is like Jesus*. Here again also God is designated Father. First of all, and uniquely, He is the Father of Jesus Christ, whom He has loved 'from the foundation of the world' (xvii. 24). He is also the Father of them who love and obey Christ (xiv. 23, xvi. 27). But running through the whole Gospel is the implied idea that He is the Father of all men, for His love is universal. He 'so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son' (iii. 16). Indeed, there are passages in which Jesus speaks of God as 'Father' without any qualification (iv. 23, xv. 16, xvi. 23). But it is not all men who know God as their Father and who live as sons. We *become* sons as we respond to Jesus Christ (viii. 31-59). As in the Synoptics, the Fatherhood of God is to be interpreted in the light of the Sonship of Jesus. 'The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing: for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth' (v. 19 f.). It is no passive, inactive God who is revealed. He is 'the living Father' (vi. 57), the fountain of life who 'hath life in Himself' (v. 26), and who is continually working (v. 17). His righteousness and holiness are but aspects of His love and grace. He is the holy (xvii. 11) and righteous (xvii. 25) Father. Because God is righteous and holy, the act in which He gives

the supreme manifestation of His redemptive love is also 'the judgement of this world' and the casting out of 'the prince of this world' (xii. 31 f.).

3. THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Paul speaks of God as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. i. 3; Eph. i. 3). The thought runs throughout his epistles that *God is like Jesus*. God's work is Christ's, and Christ's is God's. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself' (2 Cor. v. 19). Jesus Christ is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. i. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 4). 'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God' shines 'in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. iv. 6).

The idea of the Fatherhood of God is dominant in Paul's thought. The conception of the Family usually takes the place of the synoptic Kingdom of God. The two ideas are not as far removed from one another as might appear. Our Lord brought them into connexion when He said, 'Seek ye first His (i.e. the Father's) Kingdom' (Matt. vi. 33). There are passages which may be taken to mean that God's Fatherhood is limited to those who are redeemed by Christ. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ' (Rom. viii. 14-17). But other passages show that Paul believeth in the universal Fatherhood of God, e.g. 'To us there is one God, the

Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him' (1 Cor. viii. 6). God the Father is the source and end of all creation, but the Fatherly purposes of God are realized only through the redeemed—those who have entered into the conscious relation of sons. 'I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named' (Eph. iii. 14 f.). 'God alone originally realizes the perfect ideal of fatherhood; and this Fatherhood is the archetype of which every other fatherhood is a shadow, and from which it derives its limited reality. . . . We may almost say that the whole texture of life is woven out of the Fatherhood of God.'¹ But although God is the universal Father, all men do not know themselves to be His sons, nor do they live in the fellowship of sons. God's Fatherly purpose in Jesus Christ is to bring men into right relations with the Father, and it is through Him that we receive the 'Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father' (Rom. viii. 15).

The two attributes of God on which Paul dwells most frequently and emphatically are His *righteousness* and His *Grace*. These are in no sense antithetical to one another, but are different aspects of that reality which may be called His *holy love*.

When Paul speaks of the righteousness of God, he means that the moral law is deep-grounded in the nature of God, and that His disposition and actions are the expressions of it. Righteousness is an aspect of holy love. God's love always aims at the highest good for man, and this includes righteousness. The

¹ Scott Lidgett: *The Fatherhood of God*, pp. 39 f.

love that disregards the interests of righteousness is neither perfect nor holy, because it sacrifices that which is essential to the highest well-being. There is no conflict between the love and righteousness of God. His love is holy. His righteousness is not a merely legal righteousness. It is directed and controlled by love. For this reason Paul can link together the ideas of the goodness and the severity of God—'Behold then the goodness and severity of God' (Rom. xi. 22).

The grace of God is the love of God going forth freely to man. The supreme proof of the grace of God is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. 'For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many' (Rom. v. 15).

The grace of God is not simply God's disposition of love to mankind. It is a spiritual energy which operates within those who love Christ, transforming and strengthening them (1 Cor. i. 4, xv. 10; 2 Cor. xii. 9; Eph. iii. 7).

Grace we implore: when billows roll,
Grace is the anchor of the soul;
Grace every sickness knows to heal;
Grace can subdue each fond desire,
And patience in all pain inspire,
Howe'er rebellious nature swell.

But the grace of God does not operate in such a way as to undermine the interests of righteousness. Grace reigns 'through righteousness' (Rom. v. 21).

4. OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

The other New Testament writing the teaching of which as to God is especially characteristic is the First Epistle of John. God is the *universal Father*. He is described as Father without any qualification (i. 2, ii. 1, 13, 16, iii. 1). But before men can enter into the consciousness and life of sonship they must undergo a moral and spiritual transformation. They must be 'begotten of God' (iii. 9). Those who continue in sin are 'the children of the devil' (iii. 10). By nature we are the objects of God's love, capable of responding to it, and therefore akin to Him (iv. 7-14). We enter into and realize our sonship as we live the life of love. The inmost nature of God is described as Light (i. 5), Life (v. 20), and Love (iv. 8, 16). 'Life' suggests the idea that God imparts Himself to men, 'Light' suggests unclouded holiness. The Father's love is, therefore, not mere benevolence; it is *holy love*.

Those who are begotten of God—that is, those who have entered into the life of love (iv. 7)—cannot hold fellowship with sin (iii. 7). It follows, then, that God's holy love reacts against all sin. To describe God in terms of love is not to disregard the interests of righteousness. John's whole argument tends to show how righteousness is made perfect in love.

As in the Fourth Gospel, God is Spirit. 'No man hath beheld God at any time' (iv. 12). But, though not apprehensible by the senses, He is known to those who love. 'Every one that loveth . . . knoweth God' (iv. 7). 'If we love one another, God abideth in us' (iv. 12).

The main theme of the Apocalypse is God's sovereignty in history.

These are the New Testament materials for the construction of the Christian doctrine of God. Christian thought, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, has been working on these materials for nineteen centuries, and has brought hidden meanings to light. The perspective of one age differs from that of another, and possibly the proportions of the modern edifice may differ somewhat from those of the edifice of the Apostolic Age. We may now proceed to set forth the Christian doctrine of God as conceived to-day.

C. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT

The first thing to be said is that God is not wholly *comprehensible*. The sense of the incomprehensibility of God developed as anthropomorphic ideas were left behind. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?' (Job xi. 7 f.). 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?' (Rom. xi. 33 f.). This does not mean that God is absolutely unknowable, but that He cannot be fully known. We may know Him in so far as He has willed to reveal Himself 'by divers portions and in divers manners,' and above all in Jesus Christ, the portrait of the unseen God.' It is necessary to

sound this note of caution that we may remind ourselves that in dealing with God we are concerned with One who transcends our highest thoughts, and that there are limits to our possibilities of knowledge. It behoves us, therefore, to proceed with reverence, abstaining from too sure a dogmatism. 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever' (Deut. xxix. 29).

I. GOD IS ETERNAL

By this we mean that He is without beginning and without end. It is not possible to prove that God is eternal in this sense. The idea has come to us by revelation. The name 'I am' (Exod. iii. 14), given to God in the Old Testament, suggests eternity of self-existence, and in the New Testament He is called 'the King eternal, . . . the only God' (1 Tim. i. 17). We may, however, go further, and say that this revelation harmonizes with what seems to us to be rational. It is hard for us to believe that any Being worthy to be called God could be other than self-existent.

2. GOD IS CREATOR

The Christian doctrine of Creation is that God is absolute Creator—that is, that He created the world 'out of nothing.' This is based on Isa. xlv. 6 f., rather than on Genesis,¹ for, as we have seen, the Genesis

¹ That the creation of the world out of nothing came to be the accepted idea of Judaism may be seen from 2 Macc. vii. 28: 'Lift thine eyes to heaven and earth, look at all that is therein, and know that God did not make them out of the things that existed. So is the race of man created. 2 Macc. probably reflects Judaistic ideas of the second century B.C.

narrative speaks of the creation of the world out of a pre-existent watery chaos. The conception of absolute creation raises difficult philosophical questions into which we need not enter here. It is enough to state that God is regarded as both the *ground* and the *cause* of the world. He 'upholds all things by the word of His power,' and He is the ultimate originating cause of all that is. 'On the creation hypothesis we face the full consequences of our faith that all things depend upon God; He is responsible for the world because He has willed it, not, indeed, in its detail, or so that every event may be traced directly to His will, but in principle and in general structure, in its mystery and terrible potentialities for good and evil, with its risks and its tragedy, its offer of triumph or shameful disaster, it has been chosen by Him.'¹

Some of the Christian Fathers held, and some modern thinkers hold, that the universe had no beginning in time, but that God is eternally creative.² This, of course, does not mean that any particular system in the universe is eternal, or that matter is necessarily eternal, but that because God is personal, and above all because His inmost nature is love, there cannot have been a time when His activity was not creative. Creation may express itself in other than material forms. But this is a purely speculative question, and cannot be pursued here.

¹ W. R. Matthews: *Studies in Christian Philosophy*, p. 199.

² 'Because God is love, He must be self-communicating, and that for Him means creation. He is eternally Love, and so, in virtue of His nature, eternally a Creator' (J. Y. Simpson: *Man and the Attainment of Immortality*, p. 270).

3. GOD IS SPIRITUAL

'God is Spirit, One who always has been and always will be. He is everywhere and knows all things.'¹ It is impossible to define 'Spirit.' The word of course suggests that which is not material. But that is a negative definition. Probably we are nearest to its positive meaning when we infer that because God is Spirit, He enters into fellowship with us. 'Spirit with spirit can meet.' Because we think of Him as Spirit, we can think of Him as everywhere, and speak of His *omnipresence*. This is not to be understood in the sense of extension in space. It does not mean that His essence fills the whole creation, but that God is accessible to us everywhere. He 'can do everywhere all that He can do anywhere. All that He is everywhere available for action at all time.'² In the same way God is *omniscient*. 'The perfect mind cannot be present without knowing that to which He is present, and cannot be omnipresent without knowing all.'³

4. GOD IS PERSONAL

Personal life is the highest kind of life which we know or can conceive. It implies intelligence, feeling and will; self-consciousness and self-determination. This does not mean that God is personal in exactly the same sense as we are. But that is because we are not fully personal. It was said by a well-known philosopher that God alone is fully personal. Human personality is but a faint copy of the divine Personality.

¹ *Wesleyan Catechism*, p. 3. For a discussion of the Transcendence and the Immanence of God, see chap xi.

² W. N. Clarke: *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 327.

³ W. N. Clarke: *op. cit.*, p. 343.

It is sometimes objected that to conceive of God as personal is to think of Him as limited. But it is the denial of personality which constitutes the real limitation. 'Such measure of personality as man possesses is the one source of infinitude within him; by virtue of it he grows in knowledge and power, and is *capax infiniti*.¹ The unquestioned limitations amidst which human personality is realized arise from the conditions under which it is being developed, not from the vital principle itself. The God of theism is not the Unconditioned, out of all relation with the universe. . . . But He is Infinite Spirit, possessed of personality in a sense that can be predicated only of the Infinite—consciousness, knowledge, feeling, will, each at its highest, and all indissolubly blended in the unity of immediate, inalienable Self-existence.'²

When we speak of God as personal we mean that He lives, thinks, feels, and wills, and that fellowship is the spontaneous expression of His nature.

5. GOD IS 'OUR FATHER'

Fatherhood involves creatorship, sovereignty, redemption, and providence. The term is to be interpreted in the light of what Jesus found and showed God to be in His filial consciousness. For purposes of convenience we speak of God under the masculine form but in God all the highest human qualities, whether of man or of woman, find perfect embodiment. When, then, we speak of the Fatherhood of God, the expression contains also the idea of the *Motherhood of*

¹ Capable of the infinite.

² W. T. Davison in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VI. 268.

God. God's disposition to us is that of fatherhood and motherhood at their highest and best—and infinitely more.

God's Fatherhood implies sovereignty. He is the Father-King. According to our Lord, the Kingdom of God is the Father's Kingdom (Matt. vi. 32 f.). God is the Father *Almighty*. To think of God as finite in power seems self-contradictory. Hence theology speaks of the *omnipotence* of God. This does not mean that God can do every conceivable thing, but that He is able to do all things that He wills to do. His will is conditioned by His nature. He is able to do all things which are in harmony with His Holy Love.¹ He is the omnipotent Father. Fatherhood involves Providence. This will be discussed in chapter XII. Fatherhood also implies certain moral attributes. These will be considered in the following paragraph.

6. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

These have been classified in many different ways (e.g. as absolute and relative, metaphysical and moral, active and quiescent, incommunicable and communicable). Perhaps the best classification is that of Haering,² who distinguishes between the attributes of *Holy Love* and those of *Absolute Personality*. The former include Goodness, Long-suffering, Faithfulness, Grace, Compassion, Wrath, Righteousness, Wisdom. The latter include Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Eternity.³ But attempts to classify

¹ For a further discussion of this point see chap. XII.

² *The Christian Faith*, Vol. II., pp. 491 ff.

³ Beauty should also be added to the list of divine attributes, though it is difficult to know how to classify it. But as every scheme of classification is artificial, that is not a matter of importance.

the attributes of God may easily become over-elaborate and too analytic. It is best to say that by the attributes of God we mean those aspects of His nature which have been revealed to us, and which we, in a measure, apprehend. The moral attributes of God are all summed up in *Holy Love*. This idea includes both Goodness and Wisdom. All the highest ideals find their embodiment and realization in Holy Love.¹ Wisdom, too, is implied in Love, for love is not perfect unless it is wise. Love is a quality which defies exact definition. It is because God is Love that He created free spirits for fellowship with Himself. His love is the source of His providential government of the world, and is the impelling motive of His redemptive activity. 'God so loved . . . that He gave' (John iii. 16). Love includes grace, which is more than a disposition of goodwill; it is a divine energy operative for our redemption. Love implies tenderness, mercy, compassion, and even capacity for suffering. The last element raises a difficulty in some minds. The orthodox teaching of the Church has been that God is impassible.² Both the *Thirty-nine Articles* and the *Westminster Confession* assert that 'God is without body, parts, or passions,' and the same teaching is found in Augustine. But if we accept the Christian revelation that God is Love, we must accept all the implications of that revelation. It is difficult to see how, if God loves us, our sins should fail to give Him pain (if we may speak after the manner of men). 'The suffering of God is not passive pain or helpless endurance; it is *active travail*. He woos the souls

¹ Wesley defined holiness as perfect love.

² i.e. incapable of suffering.

of men and wrestles with them. He is by men's sides in their conflicts, sharing their burdens and nerving their arms for the fight. His heart is wounded by every rebuff, but this does not mean that He is reduced thereby to a pitiable state of misery. On the contrary, His love burns with an intenser flame, and He continues to travail for men until He wins them.¹

God's love is holy. The idea of love must be freed from every human association which debases it. Because God's love is holy, it seeks the highest well-being of its object. It cannot, therefore, make light of sin or forgive easily. To gloss over sin would be to fail in love. For this reason the conception of the *wrath* of God is not incompatible with that of His love. Because of its human associations, the word is not entirely congruous, but it is the best available to express the idea. Because God is love, both His nature and His actions are altogether righteous, and spontaneously react against sin. Indeed, it may be said that His righteousness is but a manifestation of His Holy Love. Both the goodness and the severity of God have their source in His unfailing Holy Love.

¹ H. M. Hughes: *What is the Atonement?* p. 92.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF MAN

It will be convenient to consider, first, Man apart from sin. Sin has entered the world as an alien immigrant, and has marred God's purpose, but let us first consider how God has constituted man. We shall defer the discussion of Sin to the next chapter.

A. THE OLD TESTAMENT

I. THE ORIGIN OF MAN

There are two accounts of the Creation of Man in the Old Testament (Gen. i. 1–ii. 3, and Gen. ii. 4–iii. 24). The First Narrative describes an ascending order of creation which culminates in man. The Second Narrative describes man as being created as the first of all living beings. In each case man is represented as supreme over the rest of creation. In the First Narrative it is stated that man was made 'in the image of God' (i. 27), and the reference is primarily to man's moral and spiritual nature. In the Second Narrative it is said that one of the constituents of man's nature is the breath of God. 'And God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a

living soul' (ii. 7). This Narrative represents God as being on intimate terms with man (Gen. iii. 8), and as caring for his interests. The great thought which underlies both Narratives is that man was so constituted as to be *capable of fellowship with God*.

It is generally recognized to-day that the Bible does not claim to be a text-book of *Science*, and we naturally turn to Science to see what it has to say as to the origin of man. The answer is that man has emerged from lower forms of life, that he is the crown of a long and slow process of *Evolution*. The wide acceptance of this theory is mainly due to the work of Charles Darwin. His particular theory no longer commands the unqualified assent of scientists. But the great principle which he affirmed—of continuous change from form to form of life, from the most rudimentary beginnings to man with his highly organized intellectual and social life—remains, and seems to be receiving continuous confirmation.

But the theory of Evolution in no wise discredits the biblical narratives, whose lofty inspiration is especially evident when they are compared with the cosmogonies ¹ of other nations and religions. The theory of Evolution does not dispense with the need for the Creator. All it does is to suggest the *method* whereby the Creator brought this wonderful world into existence, and above all man who (according to the theory of Evolution no less than the book of Genesis) is the crown of all created things. The glory of God's handiwork is in no wise diminished, if it was accomplished by a process rather than by one creative

¹ A cosmogony is a theory of the creation of the world and of man.

act. Because the Evolution theory teaches that man has an animal ancestry, it does not thereby reduce man to the level of the beasts. It is true that it is not easy to explain the emergence of man's higher moral and spiritual capacities on the evolution hypothesis,¹ but, if the creative Spirit of God was active in the evolutionary process, it might without any straining of the words be said that 'God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life'—spiritual as well as physical life.

2. MAN AND NATURE

Science therefore represents man as rooted and grounded in Nature—as part and parcel of the material creation. This is consistent with the teaching of the Old Testament, only that the Old Testament goes much further, and represents man as being the lord of Nature and as capable of rising far above it. It is quite consistent with the teaching of the Old Testament 'to recognize fully the palpable truth that man is, on one side, or in one aspect, a piece of Nature. His life is rooted in Nature. . . . The Bible speaks of man, as a rule, not in his relation to Nature, but in his distinction from it. . . . It assumes that man is not merely *in* Nature, but *over* it. In virtue of that relation to God, that kinship to Him, which is of his very essence, man is destined to have dominion over creation.'²

¹ 'Under what I call emergent evolution, stress is laid on the coming of the new. Salient examples are afforded in the advent of life, in the advent of mind, and in the advent of reflective thought' (Lloyd Morgan: *Emergent Evolution*, p. 1).

² J. Denney: *Studies in Theology*, p. 75.

3. THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN

There is little profit in the effort to elaborate an Old Testament psychology, for the psychological conceptions of the Old Testament are elementary and undeveloped. The clear-cut distinction between body and soul, so familiar to us, is not found in the Old Testament. Two words are used to describe man's psychical nature, *nephesh* (lit., that which breathes), and *ruach* (wind), the latter tending to stand for the higher state of consciousness. But the idea behind Old Testament thought is that man was made out of the dust of the ground and out of the breath of the Almighty (Gen. ii. 7). His personality consisted of his body plus the divine breath.¹ The being so constituted was 'in the image of God' (Gen. i. 26 f.), that is, he was endowed with moral and spiritual capacities; he was capable of fellowship with God and of growth into the likeness of God (Ps. xvii. 15). The interest of most of the Old Testament writers was, of course, in Israel and in Israel alone, though some writers had a wider outlook. But, whether the reference is to Israel or to a wider constituency, it is always assumed that men are free and responsible, and are capable of responding to the call of God, of living in fellowship with Him, and of doing His will. This fact throws far more light upon the Old Testament conception of the constitution of man than the most elaborate discussion of the psychological terms used.

It was out of its experience of fellowship with God that Israel attained the idea that man is of such

¹ In the later Old Testament writings, spirit has come to mean far more than 'breath.

transcendent worth that he is destined for immortality. Clear references to a blessed life beyond the grave are but few in the Old Testament, and such expressions belong to the later stages of the history of the people. But when they occur they are due to the experience which resulted from the fact that man was made for fellowship with God. 'It is from the consciousness of this new life in God . . . that the doctrine of a blessed immortality was developed in Israel. It was a new creation—the offspring of faith in God on the part of Israel's saints.'¹ Thus the Old Testament opens the way for the great conception that the being created out of the dust of the ground and out of the breath of the Almighty is of such transcendent worth that he is capable of a fellowship with God which even Death cannot destroy. 'Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory' (Ps. lxxiii. 24).

B. THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Christian doctrine of Man springs directly out of the Christian doctrine of God. As the New Testament gives us a nobler and truer conception of God than the Old Testament, so it gives us a nobler and truer conception of the image of God. For the Old Testament terms 'God' and 'the image of God' the New Testament substitutes the words 'Father' and 'son' or 'child.' Man is to be interpreted in the light of the fact that he is potentially a child of God. The incarnation of the Son of God is itself a

¹ R. H. Charles: *Between the Old and New Testaments*, p. 103.

declaration of the worth which God attaches to man. It is a declaration that human nature, despite its corruption by sin, is worth redeeming and is capable of being redeemed. Sin and its effects will be discussed in the next chapter, but it is worth remarking here that the New Testament teaches that the divine light in man has never been wholly quenched by sin. There is a 'light which lighteth every man' (John i. 9).¹

I. BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

The psychological ideas embodied in the New Testament are more clearly defined and developed than those of the Old Testament, and it is worth while noting the main terms used.

(1) *The Body*

The New Testament does not reveal the tendency which was present in Greek thought to disparage the body. It does not yield support to the doctrine that sin has its seat in the body, or to that of the body as the prison-house of the soul. The very fact that the eternal Son of God took a human body would seem to prove that the body is not evil in itself. Moreover, our Lord always treated the body as an integral part of human nature. He ministered to the bodily needs of men as well as to their spiritual needs. He fed the hungry and healed the sick. He made ministry to the body a test of discipleship (Matt. xxv. 35, 42). He Himself was no ascetic. 'The Son of Man came eating and drinking' (Matt. xi. 19). But this is not

¹ 'And this light, if man did not hinder, would shine more and more to the perfect day' (Wesley: *Notes on the New Testament*; note on John i. 9).

to say that Jesus did not recognize the distinction between soul and body. On the contrary, He makes it clear that the body is the lower part of a man, and the soul the higher. 'Though the body is a true part of our humanity, its value is not to be compared for a moment with that of the spiritual part (Matt. x. 28). Those who follow Jesus must be prepared, if need be, to surrender their bodies to the sword and the cross, (Matt. xxiii. 34); but "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"' (Matt. xvi. 26).¹

Paul, too, takes an exalted view of the body. He says, 'Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? . . . glorify God therefore in your body' (1 Cor. vi. 19 f.). 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service' (Rom. xii. 1). 'The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess. v. 23). While the body is not the seat of sin, it is the instrument of sin. 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness' (Rom. vi. 12 f.). 'I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members' (Rom. vii. 23). The body needs to be redeemed (Rom. viii. 23). The body is an essential part of human nature—but not always this present body of flesh. Paul says, 'if

¹ Hastings: *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, I., p. 217.

there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body' (1 Cor. xv. 44). 'The spiritual body is the product of the new life in Christ and is the counterpart of our present material body; it is conceived to be the outcome of the spiritual life "sown" in the corruption, dishonour, and weakness of man's present life (1 Cor. xv. 42 f.; 2 Cor. v. 1-5; cf. Gal. vi. 7 f.); it is the result of the gradual transformation of the Christian into the image of "the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 18). The resurrection body is definitely ascribed to the indwelling Spirit. "If the Spirit of Him that raised Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11)'¹ It is in order to conserve this truth that the Church has clung so tenaciously to the doctrine usually termed the resurrection of the body.

It is important to note St. Paul's use of the word *flesh*. He draws a contrast between *flesh* and *spirit* (Rom. viii. 4-13, Gal. v. 16 ff.) 'The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace: because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God' (Rom. viii. 6 f.). 'The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like' (Gal. v. 19-21). It has been contended that this means that the flesh is evil in itself, and that therefore sin originates in the flesh. But it is now generally agreed that this is not the apostle's meaning. Only five of the works

¹ Wheeler Robinson: *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, pp. 130 f.

of the flesh enumerated in Galatians are in the strict meaning of the word sensuous, while it is clear that enmity, jealousies, wraths, heresies, cannot be so described. Paul's aim seems to be not to show that sin originated *from* the flesh, but that sin is powerful *in* the flesh. The body is the part of human nature most open to attack by sin. But to admit that the impulses and appetites of the flesh are often the occasion of sin is not to say that the flesh is sinful in itself. Those who walk in the Spirit can make the flesh the servant of the spirit.

(2) *Soul and Spirit*

It is not easy to distinguish clearly between the uses of these two terms in the New Testament. Sometimes undoubtedly they are synonymous (e.g. Luke i. 46 f.; Phil. i. 27), but broadly speaking it may be said that the soul is regarded as the person as embodied, while the spirit is the person considered apart from the body, and as like God.

The chief difference between the use of the word soul (*psyche*) in the New Testament and that of the word used for soul in the Old Testament (*nephesh*) is that the former frequently occurs with the implication of the continuance of life after death. The word spirit (*pneuma*) seems to denote a higher aspect of conscious life than *psyche*. As used by Paul, it generally denotes the higher nature of man, and a clear distinction is not always drawn between this and the work of God's Spirit in man. It is doubtful whether the Apostle drew the distinction sharply in his own mind, for he evidently believed that there is

that in man which responds to the regenerating activity of the Spirit of God.

It is, therefore, not to be assumed that New Testament psychology treats soul and spirit as separate entities. It is safer to regard soul and spirit together as representing the higher side of man's nature, and spirit usually as having special reference to this higher nature as redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

2. THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL

The question of the *origin of the soul* has been much debated. Three theories have been advanced: *Pre-existence*, *Traducianism*, and *Creationism*. Origen describes these theories thus: 'The question is, first whether the human spirit is created or has existed from the beginning (*pre-existence*); next, if created, whether it was created once for all and connected in such a way with the body as to be propagated along with it, by natural generation (*traducianism*), or whether it is created successively and in each individual case, added from without, in order to vivify the body forming in the womb (*creationism*).'

Origen himself favoured the theory of *Pre-existence*, but this theory has not met with wide acceptance, because it has no support in Scripture and on other grounds. Of the other two theories, Traducianism naturally appeals to the scientific mind, and Creationism to the religious mind. But it is possible that the truth lies in some combination of both. No one doubts that the bodily organism of each of us is derived from the organisms of our parents. 'What

becomes the organism of the offspring has been at one stage of its history an integral constituent part of the parent organism or organisms.' But this does not appear to be true of the psychical side of our nature. The mind of the child has never been a part of the mind of the parent or parents. And yet we undoubtedly inherit some of our mental and moral characteristics from them. But it seems clear that what we inherit is not our personality, but certain *tendencies* to develop along particular lines. 'In dealing with the *origination* of the fresh personality, we seem to have reached a point where it is inevitable that we should introduce into science itself that very notion of a new creation which we rightly exclude from the physical sciences because it would be superfluous there. The scholastic doctrine of the direct creation of each "rational soul" by God appears to embody a principle which psychology cannot afford to overlook. The appearance of a new psychical subject of experience¹ is a fact which is and must remain inexplicable by any theory of development. But once there, the new subject has its special range of "tendencies" and "capabilities," and these, out of which it has to make its character, are conditioned in various ways by its ancestry.'²

3. THE UNITY OF THE RACE

We have seen how man is constituted, but each individual is not to be regarded as ultimately a self-dependent unit. The race is a unity, and that not

¹ What psychologists call the Pure Ego or the self that experiences, 'is by no means identical with the metaphysical concept of a soul' (J. Ward: *Psychological Principles*, p. 35).

² Professor A. E. Taylor in *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge*, pp. 461 f.

merely in a physical sense, but with a deeper meaning. 'None of us liveth to himself' (Rom. xiv. 7). We depend on one another for the development of our separate personalities. Our fundamental mental and even moral conceptions have been reached through the intercourse of individuals with one another. There are many members, but one body. 'And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you' (1 Cor. xii. 21). We find ourselves in the service of one another. 'He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it' (Matt. x. 39). The human race is one family whose Father is God. Each man realizes himself as he fulfils his obligations to the family. Personality is made perfect in love.

4. IS MAN FREE?

This is a question around which much controversy has raged through the history of thought. It cannot be said that even yet philosophers are unanimous as to the answer, though the trend of belief is quite definitely in the direction of the affirmation of freedom, subject to certain limitations. Most ordinary men, who have never troubled themselves with philosophy, would agree with Dr. Johnson, who said to Boswell, 'Sir, we *know* our will is free and there's an end of it.'

The doctrine of the *Freedom of the Will* has been attacked from two directions: (a) It is said that as man is a part of Nature which is governed by unchanging laws, he must himself be the subject of those laws. In a universe which seems to be governed by

rigid necessity in all its parts, there is no room for such a changeful element as free will. (b) On psychological grounds it is held that man's conduct is the inevitable outcome of his character, which, in its turn is influenced by his conduct. Man begins by acting according to the disposition with which his heredity and environment have endowed him. Such action confirms his disposition. All his actions therefore are the inevitable expression of what he is in himself. They were all latent in the initial germ of his personality. Character issues in conduct, and conduct stereotypes character—that is the vicious circle in which man is involved and there is no room for freedom of choice.¹

The answer to such arguments as these is that while man is part of Nature, experience proves that he is able to transcend Nature. 'There is a spirit in man.' It is plain to us that many of the men and women whom we know are not the mere products of heredity and environment, for they have risen above or fallen beneath these influences. Moreover, not only have we power to transcend Nature; we are able to transcend ourselves. Man has the power of self-detachment, whereby he can view himself, as it were, apart from himself and can say, 'That action was not worthy of me. Henceforth I determine to act otherwise.' The inward 'I ought' which is so deep-grounded in human nature seems to demand as its necessary corollary 'I can.' There can be no doubt that, until they are brought into contact with philosophy, most men take it for granted that they are free to choose between conflicting courses of action. All penal codes are

¹ The Freedom of the Will has also been attacked from the standpoint of the Omnipotence of God. This is discussed in chap. xii. pp. 236 f., 247 f.

based on this belief. If the consciousness of freedom is a delusion, it is a very widespread delusion. It is difficult to believe that an instinct or intuition so deep-seated in man is not to be trusted.

It must, however, be admitted that liberty is not absolute. In the moral life there are limits to our freedom. What philosophers call 'liberty of indifference' (that is, freedom to act at any given moment in complete independence of our character) is non-existent. The will only realizes freedom in so far as it is brought into surrender to and co-operation with the will of God 'whose service is perfect freedom.' It is true that to a large extent we are creatures of habit, and that in the main our conduct is the expression of our character. The confirmed miser is not given to spontaneous fits of generosity. But even the miser may be moved to generous feeling and to a generous choice, though, when the time for action comes, he will probably fail. The truth seems to be that in the moral life we have *liberty of choice but only a limited liberty of giving effect to our higher choice*.¹ It is here that the grace of God comes to our aid and enables us to achieve freedom. On one occasion Paul says, 'I cannot be good as I want to be, and I do wrong against my wishes' (Rom. vii. 19, Moffatt)—that is liberty of choice, but not liberty of action. But on another occasion he says, 'I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me' (Phil. iv. 13). The grace of God breaks through the chain of cause and effect, cuts off the entail of the past, and endues the will with the power which makes it more than conqueror. Thus we

¹ It appears to be a defect of the will that, owing to the corruption of sin, it is easier to give effect to an evil choice than to a good choice.

only attain to the widest and highest ranges of freedom as we draw upon the resources of the divine grace which are ours in Jesus Christ. Man has freedom of choice, but in order to give effect to his choice in the worthiest moral action, he needs the *moral dynamic* of the grace of God.

5. SUMMARY

We may sum up the New Testament teaching by saying that man is regarded as a *personality*, self-conscious and self-determining. His personality derives its worth from its moral and spiritual capacities. It is a personality made for fellowship with God and capable of growing into the likeness of God. Such a fellowship cannot be broken, even by death. Man's nature is to be interpreted in the light of these governing facts. He is a child of God, with all the moral and spiritual possibilities therein implied. The fact that man is capable of God-likeness and is destined for immortality gives to his personality a unique worth. As we shall see in the next chapter, man's fellowship with God is marred by sin and his sonship has been 'broken,' but the message of the gospel is that, in and through Christ, God redeems men into the fellowship of sons. Man realizes the glory of his nature and rises to the height of his calling, when he is reconciled to God, is brought by Christ to a realization of his sonship, and strives to live as a child of God. But although Christianity thus teaches the sacredness of each separate personality and its intrinsic worth in the sight of God, the individual is not regarded as existing for himself alone. He is a member of a family, and he, apart from his brothers, is not made perfect.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF SIN

WE have been considering the constitution of human nature. We found that man is made in the image of God, is called to be the child of God. But both Scripture and experience teach us that the image is marred, the sonship is broken. This is due to sin. It will be convenient to discuss this question under the following heads: (1) The historical origin of sin. (2) The consequences of sin. (3) The nature and meaning of sin. Logically the third division should be considered first. But an adequate definition of sin can only be reached after sin has been viewed in the light of its history and of the development of Christian thought on the subject. Meanwhile we may accept, as a provisional definition—sin is the disobedience of a free agent to the will of God. But we shall have to look at the matter more closely later in the chapter.

A. THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF SIN

Christian theology has been largely dominated by the story recorded in Gen. iii., but an edifice has been raised on this story which it will not bear. As we shall see, a close examination shows that deductions have

been drawn from the story for which there is no warrant in the narrative. Scholarship has brought to light the fact that parallels may be found to many of the elements of the story in the records of other early religions. These stories seem to be akin rather than parallel, but the point to be noted is that they all seem to be constructed out of similar materials.

If it be asked whether the biblical writer regarded the story as literal history or not, the answer is doubtful. For the writer lived at a time when the distinction was not wont to be clearly drawn between facts of history and psychological facts which had gradually found symbolical expression. This, however, does not affect the inspiration of the narrative. Inspiration is manifested, not merely in creative thought, but in the use that is made of pre-existent material. The biblical story stands apart from all other similar stories by its spirituality of outlook, its depth of moral insight, and its apprehension of the one living God, from disobedience to whom sin arises. These are infallible marks of inspiration. The story of the Fall¹ is a wonderful description of sin, and of its psychological origin in the race and in the individual.

It has often been overlooked how slight an influence this narrative had on Old Testament thought. The only passages in which any reference appears to be made to it are Ezek. xxviii. 13; Job xxxi. 33, R.V.; Hos. vi. 7; and Isa. xliii. 27; but these seem to have no special significance. It is only when we pass to the literature of the two centuries immediately preceding the coming of Christ that we find the Genesis

¹ The word 'fall' is not found in the canonical Scriptures to describe the sin of our first parents, but is derived from Wisdom x. 1.

story playing a dominant part in Jewish theology. It may be noted, however, that some of the apocalyptic writers of this period, in discussing the origin of sin, take as their basis Gen. vi. 1-4 rather than Gen. iii.

There is no record in the Gospels that our Lord ever referred to Gen. iii. or, indeed, threw any light upon the historical origin of sin. His main concern was with the fact of sin, and with its forgiveness. It is only in the Pauline writings that the story of the Fall seems to attain to any prominence. But careful exegesis of the relevant passages shows that nowhere does his argument depend for its truth upon the literal historicity of Gen. iii. 'It is quite futile to think that a Pauline doctrine of the origin of evil can be deduced from Rom. vii. 7 ff. There are undoubtedly allusions here to Gen. iii. so far as the expressions are concerned, but no historical doctrine can be based on this piece of generalized and ideal autobiography. If we say that in 1 Cor. xv. 21 ff., 44 ff., the mortality of man is made to depend on his inheritance of Adam's nature, and that in Rom. v. 15-21 the condemnation of man, with all its fatal consequences, is conceived as being dependent upon his being involved somehow in the transgression by Adam of God's express command, we go as far as the apostle does. . . . He makes no use of the serpent or the Devil in explaining the origin of evil. Man is a sinner, all men are sinners, sin is in the stock, and has been from the beginning; it is deep, virulent, constitutional, no hurt to be healed slightly. But St. Paul's theodicy¹ is not in a doctrine of its origin, in the act of Adam or otherwise; it is in his doctrine of redemption. Sin in its unity and

¹ A Theodicy is a vindication of the divine government of the world.

universality may be taken for granted, and it may also be overcome; but not even on the basis of the Bible—Old Testament or New Testament—will its origin ever be explained.’¹

B. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

Theology usually treats of the consequences of sin² under three heads: (1) Original sin, or depravity; (2) Guilt; (3) Death.

(1) ORIGINAL SIN

It is held that ‘the guilt of the first transgression is reckoned in its consequences upon all the race represented by the first transgressor. But not apart from their own sin; all are not only regarded as sinners, but made sinners also through the inheritance of a nature of itself inclined only to evil.’³ This idea is supposed to be ultimately derived from Gen. iii. But there is no hint of such a suggestion in this chapter. It is not stated that Adam’s sin stood in any kind of causal relation to the sin of succeeding generations. Nor is this teaching found anywhere in the Old Testament. The Old Testament teaches clearly that *sin is universal* (Job iv. 17, R.V. marg., xiv. 4, xxv. 4; Prov. xx. 9; 1 Kings viii. 46; 2 Chron. vi. 36; Eccles. vii. 20; Ps. cxxx. 3, cxliii. 2). But nowhere is this universal sinfulness connected with the Fall. The

¹ J. Denney in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, V. 705.

² The consequences of sin after death are discussed in chap. x.

³ W. B. Pope: *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, II. 47 f.

Old Testament also teaches the reality of inborn or inherited depravity (Gen. vi. 5, viii. 21; Job xv 14 f.; Ps. li. 5; Jer. xvii. 9), but here again it is not suggested that this inborn taint is an inheritance from Adam. The first instance in literature in which a connexion is made between the Fall of Adam and Eve and human sinfulness is in Ecclesiasticus xxv. 24 (about 180 B.C.): 'From a woman was the beginning of sin; because of her we all die.' This does not mean that a woman was the cause of sin, but that she was its historical starting-point. This passage is also the first assertion in literature that physical death is the consequence of the Fall. It is not until the first century A.D. that we find established in Jewish literature a *causal* connexion between the Fall and the inherited depravity of the race. 'O thou Adam, what hast thou done? for though it was thou that sinned, the evil is not fallen upon thee alone, but upon all of us that come of thee' (2 Esdras¹ vii. 118). The doctrine that the inborn taint of depravity which is characteristic of man is due to the Fall of Adam is thus a contribution to theology which is distinctive of Judaism towards the beginning of the Christian era, though, of course, it may go back to an earlier date. There is no record in the Gospels that our Lord ever spoke of man as having an inborn tendency to sin *derived from the Fall*. Our Lord plainly declares the reality and universality of sin as an actual fact in human experience (cf. Matt. vii. 11; Luke xi. 13), but does not seem to have concerned Himself with the question of origin. But it is significant that His teaching is free from entanglement with the prevalent Jewish theology. Paul, on

¹ 2 Esdras is often quoted as 4 Ezra.

the other hand, uses freely prevailing Jewish ideas¹ as to the origin of human sinfulness. It was natural that he should use these modes of thought as he used others derived from Jewish sources, but it may rightly be questioned whether ideas, which have their source in Judaism, but have no support in the record of our Lord's teaching, are to be regarded as an essential part of Christian teaching. The crucial point is that Paul held racial depravity to be a fact. His mode of expressing and expounding this fact is a matter of secondary interest.

(2) GUILT

It has been held that not only have Adam's descendants inherited inborn corruption from him, but that they have also inherited his guilt. Augustine, for instance, wrote 'that one sin admitted into a place where such perfect happiness reigned, was of so heinous a character, that, in one man, the whole human race was originally, and as one may say, radically, condemned.' Theologians have distinguished two kinds of guilt—guilt in respect of responsibility for the act (*reatus culpae*), and guilt in respect of liability to punishment (*reatus poenae*). It is true, of course, that all men have gone the way of Adam, and are both responsible for sinful acts and liable to punishment. As the writer of the *Apocalypse of Baruch* (first century A.D.) said, 'Each man has become the Adam of his own soul.' But is each man morally responsible for the sin of Adam? It can be only in the mystical

¹ In addition to the instances of Jewish teaching already given we may note here that the Devil is identified with the serpent for the first time in literature in Wisdom ii. 24 (about 50 B.C.): 'By envy of the Devil, death entered the world.'

sense that we all existed potentially in Adam, but it is difficult to attach any ethical significance to this idea.¹ Are we all under condemnation—i.e. liable to punishment—because of Adam's sin? There is a profound element of truth in this idea. As we have seen, the race is a unity. As no man liveth to himself, so no man sinneth to himself. We all suffer for one another's sins. According to the Gospels, our Lord did teach that the whole race is under condemnation because of sin, though the offer of redemption is more emphatic than the note of condemnation, but there is no suggestion that the condemnation is on account of the inherited guilt of Adam's sin.

(3) DEATH

Much has been made by theologians of the idea that physical death is the penalty of Adam's sin. The idea has been based partly on a misinterpretation of Gen. ii. 17. 'For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' It is very doubtful whether the reference here is to physical death. Gen. iii. 19 teaches that man was created mortal ('Dust thou art,' &c.), and was therefore subject to death, before he ate of the forbidden fruit. The theory which connects the subjection of the whole race to the law of death with the sin of our first parents appears for the first time in literature (as has already been pointed out) at the beginning of the second century B.C. 'From a woman was the beginning of sin; and because of her we all die' (Ecclesiasticus xxv. 24).

¹ The term 'imputed guilt' has been used in this connexion. But that is an unethical idea.

We must, therefore, approach the teaching of the New Testament bearing in mind the fact that the idea which connects sin with physical death has its roots in Jewish apocryphal and apocalyptic literature. This, of course, does not prove that it is erroneous. But since the idea appears to be absent from the teaching of our Lord, it may well be that it is no part of the Christian gospel, but is one of the temporary forms in which the apostles clothed the truth. If we turn to the teaching of Paul (Rom. v. 12-21; cf. 1 Cor. xv.) we find that there can be no doubt that he accepts the traditional idea connecting physical death with the fall of Adam. Doubtless this is implied in 'The wages of sin is death,' but his use of the word in different senses is not clearly differentiated. Sometimes it is used in the ordinary sense of physical death, but more often it refers to the total consequences of sin as they work themselves out in the personality, including among them the death of the body. Paul sounds the deepest note in 1 Cor. xv. 56: 'The sting of death is sin.' It is sin which gives death its significance in relation to conscience. The deepest element in the thought of Paul is, therefore, that sin entails moral consequences of so disintegrating and deleterious a character as to be fittingly described by the term 'death.' These are the enduring penalties of sin, which it is the purpose of the grace of God to avert.¹

C. DEVELOPMENT OF CHURCH DOCTRINE

It is obviously possible to indicate here only the chief landmarks in the history of the doctrines relating to sin. The earliest revolt against the doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin² was led by

¹ This section is, in the main, reproduced from the writer's book *What is the Atonement?* pp. 31 ff.

² These doctrines did not develop very early, particularly in the Greek Church.

Pelagius (beginning of the fifth century A.D.). He was primarily a moral reformer, not a theologian, and was at first more concerned with practice than with theory. He said, 'To commit sin and then to lay the blame on your nature is really to lay the blame on God, who gave men this nature. God commands nothing impossible.' His two chief disciples were *Celestius* and *Julian of Eclanum*. These three men were the founders of what came to be known as *Pelagianism*, though they were not at all points in agreement with one another. The main outlines of the system are as follows:

1. Adam was created mortal, and would have died whether he had sinned or not.
2. The sin of Adam injured himself only, and not the human race.
3. The law leads to the Kingdom, just as the gospel does.
4. New-born infants are in that state in which Adam was before his disobedience.
5. The whole race of men does not die through the death or disobedience of Adam, neither does it rise through the resurrection of Christ.
6. Every man can live without sin if he wishes.
7. Infants, even if not baptized, have eternal life.
8. The Pelagians held very inadequate views of *grace*. They held it to consist chiefly in Christ's example. They admitted it in the sense of divine power, but did not hold this to be necessary to the work of salvation. Grace simply helps forward the will to perform Christian duties. Pelagianism was a rationalistic system, which was blind to the deepest element in human experience in general and in Christian experience in particular. Its conception of human nature is so individualistic as to become 'atomistic.' In effect, it denied the solidarity of mankind. It has no explanation to offer of the universality of sin, or of the depth of men's sense of guilt. It removes the centre of gravity in Christian theology from God to man. Man can save himself by the exercise of his free will, and he has no need to depend on the grace of God.¹ Pelagianism was formally condemned at the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431.

The great opponent of Pelagianism was *Augustine*, Bishop of Hippo (A.D. 354-430). Harnack holds that Augustinianism was not the fruit of controversy with Pelagianism, but that both movements arose independently, as the expression of tendencies which are always operative: (1) emphasizing the human element in the work of salvation, (2) emphasizing the divine element. There can be

¹ The following elements 'were practically absent from the system of Pelagius: firstly the existence of sin as habit and our inability, in spite of formal freedom, to do the things that we would; and secondly, the social nature of man and the physical unity of the race' (Tennant: *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, p. 15).

little doubt, however, that the course of the controversy influenced the development of Augustine's thought. Augustine was the inventor of the expression 'Original Sin,' though he denied that he invented the doctrine. He held that because the whole human race existed potentially in Adam, all men have an enfeebled and corrupt nature as the result of Adam's transgression. Sin is passed on by the natural process of generation. Consequently, the race is *una massa peccati* or *luti* (one mass of sin or mud). All unbaptized infants are damned, though the concession is made that it is a mitigated form of damnation. The corruption of man due to the Fall extends to his whole nature, including the will.

In his latest works Augustine asserts man's total incapacity for good. The only freedom that is left him is freedom to sin, which, without the corresponding power of freedom not to sin, is, of course, not freedom in any real sense. Moreover, Augustine taught that 'sin is the penalty of sin'—that is, that man's impotence for good is in the nature of a punishment. Plato had said, 'No one considers what is the greatest penalty of wrongdoing, namely, to be conformed to the likeness of wicked men.'¹ And it is a profound truth that one of the worst consequences of sinful acts is the formation of sinful habits. But it is a long way from this to Augustine's assertion that an obligation to sin was transmitted to the posterity of Adam. Owing to the corruption of human nature and the inherent weakness of the will, man can do nothing good by his own unaided strength. For this he needs the *grace* of God. But Augustine regards grace, not only as assisting the will, but as absolutely controlling it. Hence his doctrine of *irresistible grace*. Grace is given, 'not because a man believes, but in order that he may believe.' The doctrine of the irresistibility of grace emphasizes, of course, Augustine's denial of human freedom. And this teaching as to the free grace of God is qualified by his teaching as to Predestination. God has predestinated some to life and some to death; grace works irresistibly in the former, but for the latter there is no way of salvation; they are lost because *in Adam* they freely chose evil.

Passages might be quoted from the earlier Augustine which modify, or even contradict, the later Augustine, but it is the later Augustine who has very largely shaped the theology of the Church.

A reaction against Augustinianism arose in North Africa and South Gaul. The leaders of this reaction, chief of whom was *John Cassian of Massilia* (c. A.D. 360-440), were known as Semi-Pelagians (though they might equally well have been called Semi-Augustinians). They admitted that the race is tainted because of Adam's Fall, and that men need the grace of God to accomplish anything good. But they held that there are seeds of good in all men, and that these are brought to fruition by the co-operation of the human will with the divine grace (prevenient and other). Grace is given to all men alike through Jesus Christ. These views spread, and the Scholastics, such as Thomas Aquinas and others, tended to modify

¹ *The Laws*, V. 728 (Jowett's translation).

the stricter Augustinianism. It was given a fresh lease of life by Calvin and Luther.

Calvin says that original sin may be defined as a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us 'the works of the flesh.' Both the corruption and its fruits are called sin. Our condemnation by God on account of the corruption of every part of our nature cannot be called condemnation for another's fault. Since the pollution resides in us, punishment is justly due to us. Even infants, bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, suffer not for another's but for their own defect. From this it follows that man's will is in bondage to sin. The will cannot make a movement towards goodness, far less steadily pursue it. The will itself, if it be a will to good, is the work of grace. Man does not yield to grace by the power of his own will. God moves man's will, effectually, in conversion, not leaving it to the sinner's choice whether he shall obey or disobey. This effectual grace is granted by God only to those whom He has predestined to life.

According to *Luther*, original sin permeates the whole human race and makes it a *massa perditionis* (a mass of ruin). Free will is an empty expression. The will is entirely in bondage. We can only speak of its freedom in so far as it was once free in Paradise, and may again be free through the grace of God.

The Council of Trent, 1563 (which is authoritative for the Roman Catholic Church), decreed that:

1. Adam through his transgression lost the original state of holiness and righteousness wherein he had been constituted, and incurred the penalty of death. He was changed in body and soul for the worse.

2. The whole race has inherited from Adam physical death and sin, which is the death of the soul.

3. The sin of Adam has passed to all by propagation, not by imitation, and there is no power in human nature to overcome it.

4. New-born infants derive original sin from Adam. This may be cleansed away in baptism.

5. But in the baptized there remains an incentive to sin, which, whereas it is left for our exercise, cannot injure those who consent not, but resist manfully by the grace of Jesus Christ.

6. Free will was attenuated by the Fall, but not extinguished.

The teaching of the *Eastern Church* is: 'As from an infected source there naturally flows an infected stream, so from a father [Adam] infected with sin, and consequently mortal, there naturally proceeds a posterity infected like him with sin, and like him mortal' (*Longer Catechism*, 1839).

The Westminster Confession (1647) teaches that our first parents by their sin fell away from original righteousness. The guilt of their sin was imputed, and their corrupted nature conveyed to all their

posterity. This original corruption makes men utterly indisposed disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil. It remains, even in the regenerated, throughout life.

The *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England (1563 and 1571) teach that original sin 'is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness and is of his own nature inclined to evil. . . . And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated.' The condition of man after the Fall is such that he can do no good works in his own strength, but is dependent on the grace of God.

The *Arminian Remonstrance* (1610) affirms that man is in the state of apostasy and sin, and can do nothing good by the energy of his free will, but only through the grace of God. The regenerate man himself, without prevenient grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil. All good deeds must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But this grace is not irresistible.

John Wesley called himself an Arminian. His sermon on original sin contains some extreme statements, but this teaching is qualified elsewhere, e.g. 'For allowing that the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is wholly destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural; it is more properly called *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this which waiteth not for the call of man.'¹ But if grace is present antecedently to the first movements of thought and will, then it does not make for clarity of thought to assert that man is *by nature* totally depraved, and that in him dwells no good thing.

It is worth noting that Charles Wesley held that even the corruption of original sin may be removed from the regenerate.

The original offence
Out of my soul erase;
Enter Thyself, and drive it hence,
And take up all the place.

D. SOME MODERN THEORIES

In order to clear the way for a constructive statement it is necessary to refer to some modern theories.

¹ Sermon on 'Working out our own Salvation.' Wesley conserved what was good in the teaching of the Reformers, namely, their denial that salvation comes by merit or works, and their assertion that it is of grace. But he abandoned what was bad in their teaching, namely, their denial of freedom and their assertion that God decrees damnation for some.

Julius Müller (1801-78) accepted the doctrine of the Fall but not the Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin. He assumed a theory of personal pre-existence, and held that the inborn taint of sin to which experience seems to witness is due to a transgression on the part of each individual before he is born into the world. This is, of course, a purely speculative theory, and Müller might just as well have said that the origin of sin is altogether outside our knowledge.

The most important modern theory of sin is the *evolutionary* theory, of which Dr. F. R. Tennant is the chief English exponent. He has thus summarized his position.

1. 'Man inherits the natural and essential instincts and impulses of his animal ancestors; these are necessarily non-moral, and there is no reason to ascribe to them any kind of abnormality. These propensities are neutral in character. . . . They are indifferent material waiting to be moralized. . . . Fear is the necessary basis both of cowardice and the highest courage. Anger is the source of righteous wrath as well as of vindictive passion.'

2. 'Voluntary action in man appears before any consciousness of right and wrong.'

'So far sin has not emerged at all.'

3. 'A period is reached during which moral sentiment is gradually evoked and moral sanctions¹ are gradually constructed. Acts once knowing no law now begin to be regarded as wrong.'

4. 'The earliest sanctions known to the race were but crudely ethical, and their crudity was but gradually

¹ By 'sanctions' is meant considerations which ratify or give force to moral obligations.

exchanged for the refinement characteristic of highly developed morality.'

'To the evolutionist sin . . . is the survival or misuse of habits and tendencies that were incidental to an earlier stage of development.'

'No natural impulse is itself sinful, unless present through our volition, and therefore through our fault.'¹ Dr. Tennant uses the word 'sin' in an individual sense. It is wrong consciously chosen and not *anything* which is contrary to God's will, whether known by the individual to be such or not.

A similar view to this is that of psychologists,² who hold that 'the instinctive impulses determine the ends of all activities and supply the driving power by which all mental activities are sustained.'³ By instincts are meant 'certain innate specific tendencies of the mind that are common to all the members of any one species.'⁴ Sin is held to begin in the failure to control the instincts, in the substitution of the animal for the rational impulse.

This theory has in it illuminating elements, but they are hardly sufficient to account for 'the exceeding sinfulness of sin' as it appears to the Christian man. It is part of the story, but not the whole of it. The shame, to which sin gives rise, springs from the fact that we judge ourselves not as animals, or as those who have an animal inheritance, but as children of the Holy God. We do not feel that we have disgraced our animal nature, but we do feel that we have disgraced our human nature. The most serious criticism

¹ Tennant: *The Origin of the Propagation of Sin*, pp. xxi. f., 95 f., 102, 104.

² Psychologists, as such, are concerned with the origin of sin in the individual rather than in the race.

³ McDougal: *Social Psychology*, p. 44.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 22.

to be brought against this theory is that it does not do justice to the constitutional as distinct from the voluntary elements in sin.¹

E. SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

What are the affirmations which theology can make to-day as to the historical origin and consequences of sin? As to the origin of sin, in view of its universality, and of the fact that there seems to be in man a bias towards evil, it is easy to believe in a Fall historical or pre-mundane—some great catastrophe which has cast a blight upon man. It does not seem sufficient to say with the author of the *Apocalypse of Baruch*: 'Each man is become the Adam of his own soul'—though that is true, so far as it goes. But the whole question is of little more than speculative interest. Our Lord never concerned Himself with it. What is vital to Christian theology is not any particular theory of the historical origin of sin, but the reality and universality of the fact of sin. The discoveries of science leave unshaken the basal presupposition of the gospel that ours is a sinful race, in need of redemption.

The facts which seem to lie behind the teaching of the Bible are these: (1) That a real choice between good and evil was necessary if man was to develop as a free moral personality. There is no warrant either in Genesis or elsewhere for the belief that man began his course in a state of 'original righteousness.' On any tenable theory, he began his career in a state

¹ See H. R. Mackintosh in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, XI. 541.

of 'innocence,' in which moral distinctions had no meaning for him. If he was to develop as a moral personality the time was bound to come when his eyes should be opened to know good and evil, and when he should make his choice between them. Sin was not necessary to his development, but temptation was. (2) That sin is a malign power, alien to the divine purpose. (3) That sinful tendencies are inseparable from the stock from which we spring. (4) That the race is an organism, all the members of which suffer or rejoice together, so that we have a vital concern in the sins of others as well as in our own.

When we turn to consider the consequences of sin, the first truth that confronts us is that *sin is a racial fact*. 'The sins of the world are many, but the sin of the world is one.' Evil seems to be an organized power in the world. Ritschl has the conception of a *kingdom of sin*, standing in opposition to the Kingdom of God. 'The subject of sin is *humanity as the sum of all individuals*, in so far as the selfish action of each person, involving him as it does in illimitable interaction with all others, is directed in any degree whatsoever towards the opposite of the good, and leads to the association of individuals in common evil.'¹ This raises the question as to whether there is a *personal power of evil* (Satan). There can be no doubt that our Lord spoke as though Satan were a reality. But it is open to argument that He was simply using the thought-forms of His age, without pronouncing on their truth. Of recent years, belief in Satan has fallen into the background of Christian teaching. Many theo-

¹ *Justification and Reconciliation*, p. 335.

logians are opposed to it on the ground that it introduces an ultimate dualism into the universe. But this is not so, unless the divine attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience are ascribed to Satan. The existence of a demonic intelligence no more necessarily implies dualism than does the existence of a sinful man. Without seeking to dogmatize, it may be remarked that 'belief in the diabolic personality rests on the same general ground of experience as belief in the divine personality. But since the latter belief is comforting and the former belief disturbing, people overlook the parallelism.'¹

The doctrine of original sin emphasizes the fact that every man is born into a sinful inheritance. What precisely does this mean? We have first to take account of what is called 'social heredity.' Each individual is influenced by the social inheritance received from previous generations, as that is embodied in laws, customs, institutions, and the whole environment of men, and as the environment in its turn has reacted on human nature. Scientific teaching as to heredity in individuals has by no means reached firm conclusions, but it seems to be agreed that, while a man cannot inherit sinful qualities, he may inherit sinful tendencies. 'We have no right at all to think of hereditary virtues and vices. A man may inherit with his physique a high degree or a low degree of sensibility to the pleasures of sex or of alcoholic drink, or a tendency to explosions of resentment; he does not inherit profligacy or drunkenness or wrath.'² A man's character depends on how he controls or directs

¹ Percy Gardner: *The Practical Basis of Christian Belief*, p. 151.

² Professor A. E. Taylor in *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge*, p. 463.

these tendencies. But it may be said that it is easier to be mastered by them than to master them—it is easier to do evil than to do good. The will seems to be impotent to make an enduring choice of good, apart from the resources of divine grace. Neither the evolutionary nor psychological account of sin can explain this weakness of the will. We are driven back on the fact that sin is fundamentally irrational—‘the one thing in the universe rightly to be called irrational, as not merely an irreducible fact but the negation of all rationality.’¹ Whether there has been an historical fall or not, ours is a *fallen race* in the sense that our *state* has universally fallen short of our *nature* as sons of God.

The conception of original guilt cannot be defended. In a strict sense a man is guilty only of those sins for which he is accountable. But there is a sense in which we may feel ourselves guilty of the ‘sin of the world.’ There is a profound truth in Charles Wesley’s lines:

Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?

The principle of sin is one in every age. If we are partakers of sin, then had we been there we might have been among the crowd that hounded our Lord to death. As this thought comes home to us we feel that we share the guilt of the actual criminals. So with all the sin of the world. In so far as we have yielded to sin, we feel that we are involved in the great conspiracy, and there is a sense in which guilt is in place. But Christian theology is not true to the

¹ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, XI., p. 543.

gospel if it separates the consideration of sin from that of *grace*. Our Lord's teaching concerning sin was inseparably bound up with His teaching as to the forgiveness of sins. The inability of the unaided will is only one side of Christian teaching; the other side is, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. xii. 9). Sin abounds, but grace much more abounds.

F. THE NATURE AND MEANING OF SIN

I. OLD TESTAMENT IDEAS OF SIN

In early times Israel shared many of the ideas of sin common to other (especially Semitic) peoples. The idea of sin in its early form is simply that of which the deity (or deities) disapproves. In the earliest parts of the Old Testament, sin is represented as disobedience to the statutes regulating the religious and social life of Israel, but these are conceived of as the will of the deity. For primitive peoples the will of the deity acted quite arbitrarily. There could be no certainty as to what he approved or condemned. The early idea of sin is purely external; it is the performance or neglect of external acts. Men have not yet learnt to distinguish between act and motive. They come into right relations with God by the observance of certain rites and tabus.¹

In early times the guilt of a particular sin attached not merely to the sinner himself, but to his kinsmen and fellow-tribesmen.

¹ A tabu (or taboo) is a ritual prohibition.

The great prophets gave their countrymen a more ethical conception of God, and consequently a more ethical conception of sin. Sin is still the transgression of the will of God, but there is a more ethical conception of the divine Will. Moreover, God is no longer regarded as being satisfied with rites and material gifts. He desires loyalty and affection. After the Exile, sins against ritual laws come into prominence once more. After the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel there was a clear realization that sin is a matter of individual responsibility, though the idea of the solidarity of the moral life of the nation was never lost to sight. The highest point in Old Testament teaching as to sin is reached in Ps. li. 'Sin is felt to be personal disobedience to a good and holy God. . . . In his attitude to sin the Psalmist places himself on God's side, and asks, not to be let off punishment, but for a new heart which will make possible a restored fellowship with God. The supreme penalty is the loss of the presence of God. Sin is no longer viewed as a mere external action; it is rather the sinful heart and character that the Psalmist has in mind.'¹

2. NEW TESTAMENT IDEAS OF SIN

The Christian man naturally turns first and foremost to our Lord's teaching for guidance as to the nature of sin. According to the Synoptic record, He taught that sin is directed primarily against God (Luke xv. 18). It is 'broken sonship.' It is the refusal of love and obedience to the all-wise and all-loving Father. Jesus taught that sin is *universal*. He began His

¹ E. J. Bicknell: *The Christian Idea of Sin and of Original Sin*, pp. 3 f.

ministry saying, 'Repent ye, and believe in the gospel' (Mark i. 15). The demand for repentance implies sinfulness. He said, 'If ye, then, being evil' (Matt. vii. 11), and 'None is good' (Matt. xix. 17, R.V. marg.). Sin consists in wrong motives and intentions as well as in wrong acts (Matt. v. 27 ff.); it has its roots in the heart. 'From within, out of the heart of man, evil thoughts proceed . . . all these evil things proceed from within and defile the man' (Mark vii. 21 ff.). But it is the emphasis which our Lord placed on the forgiveness of sins, which most of all reveals the seriousness which He attributed to sin (Luke xv. 11-32; Matt. xviii. 23-35). Ignorance is only a partial excuse for sin (Luke xii. 48; cf. xxiii. 34). The words used to denote sin in the Synoptics indicate the missing of a mark or the transgression of a law. The former is the more frequent meaning, but it is not to be interpreted in the merely negative sense of failure. It is to choose a lower ideal when a higher is present to the consciousness. And this brings us to what is regulative in the Christian conception of sin. Jesus Christ Himself is the ideal and standard of conduct. It is as we fall short of His spirit that we violate the conditions of sonship, and thus fall into sin.

In the *Fourth Gospel* Jesus is represented as teaching that sin is bondage. 'Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin' (viii. 34). The capital sin is that of unbelief in Christ (xvi. 9). That is, the Christian idea of sin is refusal of the ideal of sonship embodied in Christ.

We need only refer here to those aspects of Pauline teaching to which reference has not already been made.

The universality of sin is realistically described in Rom. i.-iii. As in the case of our Lord, so in that of Paul, the seriousness of his view of sin is proved by the overwhelming importance which he attaches to forgiveness (Rom. v.-vii.). Sin is almost personified, and is represented as an indwelling power, which paralyses the will (Rom. vii. 17 f.).

According to 1 John, to sin is to fall short of our high calling as the children of God (iii. 1-6). More particularly it is to fail in love (ii. 7-11).

The *Epistle of James* echoes the teaching of Jesus when it says, 'Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed' (i. 14; cf. Mark vii. 21 ff.). James speaks of sin in relation to the law rather than in relation to Christ, but the law is the law of Christ (ii. 8, iv. 11 f.). He who keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point is become guilty of all (ii. 10). To sin even in what seems a small matter is to surrender to the principle and the power of sin.

3. SOME THEORIES OF THE MEANING OF SIN

1. *Augustine* held that moral evil is the mere absence or privation of good. 'What are called vices in the soul are nothing but privations of natural good.' There is, indeed, an element of defect in all sin, but such a definition cannot be held to be exhaustive. When we appeal to our experience we know evil as a positive reality and power in our lives. 'An evil will is a very positive and destructive force.'¹

¹ Bicknell: *The Christian Idea of Sin and Original Sin*, p. 84.

2. *Kant* held that nothing is good except a good will, and, therefore, that nothing is bad except a bad will. The seat of sin is, therefore, in the will. Sin is in the perverse action of the will contrary to the higher dictates of reason.

3. *Hegel* and others have contended that sin is a *necessity*, that it is only by experience of sin that man can learn to overcome it and attain to goodness. This contention has the semblance of truth. It is true that temptation is necessary in order that man may learn to distinguish between good and evil, and to attain the former. Untempted virtue is never safe; indeed, it is doubtful whether it should be called virtue in the proper sense of the word. But it is a long step from the assertion of the necessity of temptation to that of the necessity of sin, and, indeed, the latter argument 'breaks down completely when applied to definite persons and definite sins.'¹ For instance, experience does not prove that drunkenness is necessary to the acquisition of sobriety.

4. The *evolutionist* holds that sin is yielding to the brute inheritance in each of us, instead of working out the beast; and psychologists hold that our instincts are the raw material of our sins. Sin is failure to control our instincts. Both statements are doubtless true so far as they go. But they are not exhaustive. Some of the worst sins (such as hatred and lying) seem to originate in the mind rather than in the bodily organization. Biological and psychological explanations of sin 'explain the form of the actual sins men commit, but not in the full sense why they commit them. . . . Evolution, therefore, may be said to

¹ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, XI., p. 542.

prescribe the conditions of man's probation and discipline; it still leaves us—as, indeed, the Bible does—with an unsolved mystery of iniquity, which throws us back on personal freedom.¹

Dr. Tennant offers the following definition: 'Sin is moral imperfection for which an agent is in God's sight accountable.'²

4. CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT

At the beginning of the chapter we adopted as a provisional definition, 'Sin is the disobedience of a free agent to the will of God.' How far can this definition be allowed to stand in the light of our investigation? In the first place, we must recognize the truth of the assertion that sin can only be attributed to an agent who is free. Sin is the outcome of the free choice of evil in preference to good. It must be agreed, too, that sin is a matter which affects our relation to God. It is not merely the choice of the lower (whether derived from our brute inheritance or not) rather than the higher, though it is always that. It is to fall short of our high calling as sons of God. It is to break the sonship. But how far does the idea of *accountability* (which seems to be implied in 'disobedience') enter into the meaning of sin? It is obvious that we sometimes choose the lower rather than the higher, in ignorance that it is the lower. Moral standards vary. What is held to be wrong in one age may be deemed to be right in another age, and vice versa. Is the term sin to be applied indiscriminately to wrong in these various senses? I

¹ Wheeler Robinson: *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, p. 302.

² *The Concept of Sin*, p. 245.

cannot be held accountable for my wrongdoing unless the higher standard was within my grasp, or unless my ignorance was my own fault. Should sin be limited to this sense of the word? St. Paul wrote, 'To him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean' (Rom. xiv. 14); that is, if, judging a particular course of action by the highest standards which I know, I deem it to be sinful, then for me it is sinful, but for someone else who is governed by different standards (which he thinks to be as high as mine) it may not be sinful. It is obvious that the word 'sinful' in this context carries the implication of accountability for sin. Are we to limit the word sin to that wrongdoing for which our conscience holds us accountable? The present writer thinks not; for what we may honestly deem to be right may be wrong in the sight of God. It is very difficult to alter the usage of long-established theological terms, and it may be doubted whether it is desirable in this case. It may fairly be contended that the definition 'Sin is moral imperfection for which the agent is in God's sight accountable' is too narrow and individual. A term is needed to cover that which is wrong in disposition or actions, not merely from the relative viewpoint of accountability, but from the absolute standpoint of God—all that which breaks the sonship, that from which the world, in every age, needs to be redeemed. It seems as though we must retain the word sin for this wider reality—not merely for the sins for which individuals are accountable, but 'the sin of the world.' Sin may then be defined as every disposition and action and habit which is out of harmony with the holy will of our heavenly Father.

CHAPTER VI

THE RECONCILIATION OF MAN AND GOD

WE have seen that God is the Father of all men, that He loves all and desires all to live in fellowship with Him as sons. But, on the other hand, we have also found that human sin has broken the sonship and clouds the fellowship. Man stands in need of God's forgiveness, and of deliverance from sin and guilt. The question arises whether it is possible for a righteous God to forgive sin without injury to the interests of righteousness. Is it possible to remove the stains of guilt from man's conscience, and to break the fetters of sinful habit? Can man and God be reconciled? The New Testament teaches that the *death of Christ* stands in a vital relation to the forgiveness of sins, and to deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. For this reason theology has been accustomed to speak of the death of Christ as an *atonement* for sin. But the word atonement is not a New Testament word. The word, which is so translated in the A.V., is rendered *reconciliation* in the R.V. The New Testament writers do not tell us precisely how the death of Christ secures the forgiveness of sins. Indeed, in the main, the different writers expound the truth in different ways. But all agree that forgiveness is

mediated to men through the Cross. Limits of space do not permit a detailed discussion here of the relevant New Testament passages. We must content ourselves with a summary of the main lines of thought on the subject in the New Testament.

I. NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

1. Our Lord is identified with Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Isa. liii.)¹ The identification is only made in so many words in Acts viii. 32 ff., but is suggested in the following passages—Luke iv. 18, xxii. 37; Mark viii. 31, cf. x. 33; Acts iii. 13, 26, iv. 27, 30; 1 Pet. ii. 21-4.

2. There are passages which seem to indicate that one of the elements in the sacrifice of the Cross was our Lord's unflinching obedience to the demands of truth and righteousness (John xviii. 37; Heb. x. 9).

3. In the Pauline epistles, the reconciliation is always represented as the act of God in Christ. The idea of a schism in the Godhead is entirely alien to Paul. In his view, Christ did nothing which was not the direct expression of the Father's righteousness and love (2 Cor. v. 19). Christ is described as a 'propitiation,' but it is God Himself who sets Him forth as such (Rom. iii. 25),² so that there is a wide

¹ The idea of the Suffering Servant (as the words 'for many' suggest) lies behind Matt. xx. 28. The word 'ransom' is a strong figurative expression to suggest *deliverance*. It is pressing the figure too far to ask to whom was the ransom paid? The passage means that our Lord by His life, and especially by His death, accomplished for man deliverance from sin.

² The term also occurs in R.V. in 1 John ii. 2, iv. 10, but it is the translation of a different Greek word, the verbal form of which occurs in Heb. ii. 17.

gulf between this idea and the pagan idea of appeasement. It may be added that the New Testament always speaks of the reconciliation of Man to God, not vice versa.

4. Paul expounds the mystical idea of victory over sin through crucifixion with Christ, burial with Him, and resurrection with Him to newness of life (Gal. ii. 20; cf. Rom. vi. 1-11).

5. The Fourth Gospel, although it recognizes the central significance of the death of Christ, does not view it in isolation, but as the culmination of our Lord's life. The Cross is the supreme event in that process whereby 'light' and 'life' entered the world.

6. Rev. xiii. 8 reads, 'And all that dwell on the earth shall worship Him, every one whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world.'¹ The words suggest that the principle of sacrifice is eternal in the Godhead and that this principle found its supreme temporal manifestation in the Incarnation, culminating in the Cross.

7. In order to expound the significance of the Cross the New Testament uses, to a limited extent, the category of *sacrifice* (Mark xiv. 24; Matt. xxvi. 28, Luke xxii. 20; Rom. iii. 25, viii. 3; 1 Cor. v. 7; Eph. v. 2; 1 Pet. i. 2, 18 f.; 1 John iv. 10; and the Epistle to the Hebrews).

¹ Some scholars hold that the clause 'from the foundation of the world' is to be connected with 'written' ('written from the foundation of the world in the book of life,') cf. xvii. 8, and that the words 'of the Lamb that hath been slain' are probably a gloss. It is a point on which scholars may fairly differ, but the matter is not vital. The idea of the sacrifice which is eternal in the heart of God may be a true idea whether the Seer of the Apocalypse intended to express it or not. It may be argued that this idea is implied in and is inseparable from the conception that 'God is love.'

The interpretation of the sacrificial terminology used in the New Testament is difficult, because we have no certain knowledge as to what was the significance attached to sacrifice at that time.

In primitive religion, sacrifice was probably at first regarded as a means of *communion* between the god and his worshipper. Side by side with this, or possibly later, arose the idea of sacrifice as a *gift* to the god. This idea dominates the sacrificial thought of the Old Testament.¹ What was the motive of the gift? Was it a thank-offering or was it intended to appease the anger of Jehovah? The answer is not clear. Doubtless both motives operated at different times but it cannot be stated dogmatically what was the significance attached to the gift in the time of our Lord. It may be that the substitutionary idea had entered into Jewish religious thought and into the interpretation of sacrifice. But whether this was the dominant view is very doubtful. In any case, the idea of the gift was gradually spiritualized. It came to be seen that the most costly gift which a man can offer is *himself*. The gifts offered in sacrifice thus became typical of the worshipper's self-surrender. The sin-offering (which appears to have been one of the later sacrifices) does not seem to have had a substitutionary or propitiatory significance. The purpose of the imposition of the hand of the offerer on the victim is not the transference of guilt from him to the victim. It simply represents the dedication of the animal to God. Were sin transferred to the victim, its flesh would necessarily be regarded as unclean, whereas it is stated to be holy (Lev. vi. 17,

¹ See G. Buchanan Gray: *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, pp. 19 f. and 40.

25, vii. 6). Further, on the Day of Atonement, it is not the sacrificial goat, but the non-sacrificial goat that bears away the sins of the people into the wilderness.

It is quite likely that the Jews of the first century A.D., as also their predecessors, observed the ritual of sacrifice because it was commanded in the Law, and without any conscious desire or attempt to penetrate to its inner meaning. But, in so far as it was interpreted, the evidence does not warrant the belief that it was usually regarded as a substitutionary or penal offering. On the contrary, it was sometimes interpreted as a rite typifying inward processes of penitence and self-surrender. It is significant that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who sees in Jewish sacrifices a type of the sacrifice of Christ, spiritualizes the idea of sacrifice. For him the essential element in sacrifice is self-surrender. The efficacious element in the sacrifice of Christ is His self-surrender to God in His sinless life and death. 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God' (ix. 14). Christ did away with the old sacrifices by His emphasis upon and His obedience to the moral and spiritual principles, which lay at the heart of the old ritual rightly interpreted. He said, 'Lo, I am come to do Thy will' (x. 9). 'By which will,' says the author, 'we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' (x. 10). He does not develop any theory as to how the sinless self-surrender of Christ sanctifies us. Christ's sacrifice 'acts on the conscience through

the mind interpreting its significance and in proportion as it is thought on.¹

It was in this sense that our Lord Himself seems to have used sacrificial language at the Last Supper (Matt. xxvi. 28; Mark xiv. 24; Luke xxii. 20). He evidently had in mind the new Covenant of which Jeremiah spoke (xxx. 31-34). He announces that God enters into a new Covenant with His people, and that this Covenant, like those of the Old Testament (Exod. xxiv. 7 f.; cf. Gen. xv., where the ritual is not strictly sacrificial, but is in many respects similar), is to be ratified by sacrifice. The significance of sacrifice, in the case of the Old Testament Covenants, lay in the fact that it was regarded as the means by which men whose wills were weak and whose good intentions were easily frustrated were enabled to maintain the Covenant. And Jesus associated the new Covenant with the sacrifice of Himself. He told His disciples that the Cross would be the means whereby they would be enabled to maintain the New Covenant. Through the Cross would come to them the assurance of divine forgiveness. By His sinless obedience, even unto death, He generated and liberated new spiritual forces, which His disciples would find to be a dynamic for the maintenance of the New Covenant with God into which they were entering. This appears to be the meaning which lies behind our Lord's use of sacrificial terminology.²

It would seem that it is in the light of such ideas as these that we must interpret the category of sacrifice as applied to the death of Christ in the New Testament,

¹ A. B. Bruce: *Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 350.

² This paragraph is derived from the author's *What is the Atonement?* pp. 62 ff.

and not by the aid of lower and mechanical conceptions which may have survived side by side with these in New Testament times.

The above summary of the main lines of New Testament thought on the relation between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins does not reveal any clear-cut doctrine of the Atonement. The New Testament does not take us much further than the statements 'Christ died for our sins' (1 Cor. xv. 3), 'the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God' (1 Pet. iii. 18). It was left to the Church to work out the implications of these statements under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

The early Church was far more deeply concerned with the problem of Christ's Person than with that of His Work. During the first two centuries of Christian history after the Apostolic age, there was little effort at constructive thought on this subject. The early Fathers, in the main, reproduced the language of the New Testament. The process of reflection began about the third century. From the time of *Origen*¹ (A.D. 185-254) to *Anselm* (1033-1109), a period of about nine hundred years, the theory that Christ's death was a ransom paid to the Devil dominated theological thought. Among those who advocated this theory were *Augustine*, *Gregory of Nyssa*, and *Bernard*. It was not always presented in the same way, and was held by some writers side by side with other views, without any attempt at reconciliation. But in one form or another this theory was dominant (though not unchallenged) until Anselm drove it off the field, not so much by direct attack as by the superior worth of his own theory. He approached the question from the standpoint of the satisfaction for human sin which is due to God's honour. If God were to forgive the sinner unpunished, He would be treating the sinner and the sinless in the same way. It is therefore due to the honour of God that sin be punished. But God, in His mercy, accepts 'satisfaction' in place of punishment—the satisfaction which was offered by Christ when 'in some way He gave Himself up, or something of Himself, for the glory of God, for which He was not a debtor.'

¹ 'To whom gave He His life as "a ransom for many"? It cannot have been to God. Was it not then to the evil one?' (Origen: *In Matt.*, xvi. 8).

Anselm's contemporary *Abailard* (1079-1142) is commonly regarded as the father of what are called the *Moral Influence*¹ theories of the Atonement. He regards the Cross primarily as a manifestation of redeeming love. 'Our redemption is that highest love in us brought about by the passion of Christ, a love which not only sets us free from the slavery of sin, but acquires for us the true liberty of the sons of God, that we may be filled with love rather than with all fear of Him who showed us so great grace, than which, on His own witness, none greater can be found.' But Abailard did not show how the passion of Christ kindles love within us and sets us free from the slavery of sin, nor did he show why love *must* choose this way of manifesting itself.

The *Reformers* developed the theory of *Penal Substitution*. According to the penal theory, God's attitude to the sinner is necessarily one of wrath, because justice demands the punishment of sin. Christ is the sinner's representative, or rather substitute, and as such He bore the due punishment of sin. The demands of justice are therefore satisfied, and God's anger is turned away.²

Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) attacked the satisfaction and penal substitution theories root and branch. He held that Christ saves by His teaching and example. The significance of the Cross is that it opened the way for His resurrection, as the result of which He exercises His priestly office in heaven.

Grotius (1583-1645) restated the penal theory from a new point of view. He was a lawyer, and the sufferings of Christ seemed to him to have been not so much a satisfaction to God as to public right. This theory is known as the Governmental theory. Christ died to vindicate the authority of the divine law. His sufferings were not retributive but deterrent.³

¹ A great deal used to be made of the distinction between what were called 'objective' and 'subjective' theories of the Atonement, i.e. between those which emphasized the influence of the Cross on God and those which gave prominence to its influence on man. The distinction is, however, passing from sight to-day, for two reasons. (1) Because it is recognized that every theory must assume that the Cross exercises a moral influence over the sinner, if it is to do its saving work, and (2) It is becoming increasingly realized that the New Testament teaches not that God forgives sin because of what was done on the Cross, but that Christ died because God is ready to forgive sin. The initiative of the Father in the work of reconciliation is being more clearly apprehended. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.'

² The distinction drawn by some of the Reformers between two elements in the work of Christ, His *active* and *passive* obedience, that is, His active life of righteousness, and His enduring of death, is valuable, as it shows a realization that Christ's life of active obedience to righteousness was an essential element in His reconciling work.

³ It will be observed that most of the above writers poured their ideas about the Cross into the moulds of dominant conceptions of their own particular age. During the period of the Fathers, when brigandage and warfare were prevalent, the practice of ransom existed. In harmony with this, man was held to be in bondage to the Devil, and the death of Christ was thought to be the ransom paid for man's deliverance. The

The theory of Penal Substitution, in one form or another, has dominated the thought of the Evangelical Churches down to modern times. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century many attempts have been made to restate the doctrine of the Atonement. Some have attempted to state the satisfaction and penal substitution theories in a new way; others have aimed at stating theories which have seemed to their authors to be more in harmony with the moral sense. To the former class belong the works of *Dr. Dale*, and *Dr. Scott Lidgett*. Dr. Dale was evidently conscious of the objections to the penal theory, but he did not succeed in breaking away from it. He held that Christ suffered the due reward of sin, Himself, instead of letting it fall on the sinner, and thus offered satisfaction to the 'eternal law of righteousness.' But 'the eternal law of righteousness' is a mere abstraction if viewed apart from God. Dr. Scott Lidgett seeks to interpret the Cross in the light of the Fatherhood of God and the spiritual obedience of Christ. He says, 'Our Lord in His death fulfilled all the conditions of filial satisfaction. He "tasted" to the full of those penal conditions which reveal the wrath of God against sin.'

We pass now to writers who repudiate the theory of penal substitution, and find the meaning of the Cross in other directions.

McLeod Campbell in his book *The Nature of the Atonement*, develops an idea to which much prominence has been given, though it is not his only, or even his main contribution to the discussion. It is that Christ offered to God on behalf of humanity the sacrifice of vicarious penitence. The same thought is revived and developed by *Moberly* in his *Atonement and Personality*.

But the theory which appears to be commanding the most general assent in the opening years of the twentieth century is that which was first stated in developed form by *Horace Bushnell*. He conceived of the Cross as the supreme manifestation in time of the sacrifice which is eternal in the heart of God. 'We are not to conceive that our blessed Saviour is some other and better side of Deity, a God composing and satisfying God; but all that there is

Mediaeval Period was the age of chivalry, and the Atonement was interpreted in terms of this institution. Sin was defined as a violation of God's honour and Christ's work as a satisfaction (Anselm). Later, in harmony with changing political conditions, the Atonement was interpreted in terms of absolute monarchy (the Reformers) and later of jurisprudence (Grotius), and Christ was represented as a substitute who bore the punishment of our sins, in the one case to appease the divine anger, in the other to satisfy the demands of public right (see David Smith: *The Atonement in the Light of History and of the Modern Spirit*, pp. 96 f). Thus, in each case, doctrine was shaped by the pouring of ideas into pre-existent moulds. It seems to have been left to *McLeod Campbell* (1856) to point out that the Atonement ought to be interpreted 'by its own light.' 'And surely this is the right course that untested pre-conceptions may not mislead us; for even as to the abstract question: "What is an atonement for sin?" it is surely wise to seek its answer in the study of the atonement for sin actually made' (*The Nature of the Atonement*, 4th ed., p. 103).

in Him expresses God, even as He is, and has been of old—such a Being in His love that He must needs take our evils on His feeling, and bear the burden of our sin. Nay, there is a cross in God before the wood is seen on Calvary; hid in God's own virtue itself, struggling as heavily in burdened feeling through all the previous ages, and struggling as heavily now, even in the throne of the worlds. This, too, exactly, is the cross that our Christ crucified reveals and sets before us. Let us come, then, not to the wood alone, not to the nails . . . but to the very feeling of our God, and there take shelter.¹ This theory is not a bare assertion that the Cross saves, by manifesting the love of God. It seeks to show how the love thus manifested saves. The Cross is not a mere dramatic representation of the love of God. It is the manifestation in time of the eternal travail of God in resistance to sin. This revelation of love reconciles the sinner to God through acting on his conscience as the mind apprehends its meaning.²

3. LINES OF CONSTRUCTION

It need hardly be said that no theory contains the whole truth concerning the relation of the Cross to the reconciliation of man and God. It is perhaps too much to hope that such a theory will ever be forthcoming. Probably every theory that has been promulgated, and which has commanded some measure of assent among Christians, has within it some element of truth, and has made some contribution to the enrichment of Christian thought. It is worth while to remark at this point that men are reconciled to God through the Cross and not through any theory of the Cross. Multitudes have been saved from sin and reconciled to God by the power of the Cross, who had not consciously held any theory of the Atonement. The crucified

¹ *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, p. 35 f. This theory does not involve *Patripassianism*, i.e. the idea of the Father suffering in the flesh. Patripassianism denied the reality of personal distinctions in the Godhead, a very different thing from the assertion that God suffered in and with Christ.

² Among modern exponents of this theory are Dr. A. M. Fairbairn, Dr. G. B. Stevens, Dr. David Smith, Mr. Vernon F. Storr, Dr. W. Temple, Dr. Newton Clarke, and Dr. Douglas White.

Christ makes His own appeal to mind and heart and conscience, and often these are illumined and moved and quickened, so that truth is apprehended by swift processes which are not easily analysed. The evangelist, therefore, need not be silent until the theologian provides him with a satisfactory theory. Nevertheless, the evangelist and the theologian may be co-workers. If the Cross 'acts on the conscience through the mind, interpreting its significance,' the evangelist's message will be with greater power if the theologian has helped his mind to interpret to other minds the significance of the Cross. The duty devolves on the theologian, therefore, to persevere in his task, even though he is aware that he cannot attain finality. Where the full-orbed vision of a many-sided truth is too much for us, it means a great deal if we can catch some glimpses of it from different angles.

The following statements about the Cross would probably command the assent (with varying emphasis) of most theologians (whatever their own particular theories), and it is perhaps well to concentrate on agreements rather than on differences.

I. As McLeod Campbell taught, the Cross is to be interpreted 'by its own light.' That is to say, we are not to start with preconceived ideas as to what God or Love or Justice is, or with theories as to how a perfect reconciliation ought to be accomplished, but we must begin with the experience of the redeeming efficacy of the Cross and must seek to understand its implications. Doctrine should not be shaped by forcing faith into certain moulds, but should be the outcome of faith thinking in terms of history and

experience. This is why we can never feel that any theory of the Cross is quite adequate. For the Cross unfolds more and more of its meaning to us as we grow in the Christian life.

2. The Cross is concerned with the *relation of persons*. Theories of the Cross are not helpful except in so far as they show how through the death of Christ men may be brought into a right relation with God, how we may enter into the fellowship of sons. It is necessary to emphasize this, obvious though it appears. We shall do well to avoid the realm of abstractions and to keep to the realm of personal relations. 'Christ suffered for sins once, . . . *that He might bring us to God* (1 Pet. iii. 18).

3. The Cross reveals God's attitude to sin, both in His resistance of it and in His condemnation of it.¹ It is impossible for any one who views sin in the light of the Cross to treat it with levity.² It has been said that 'the sense of sin is a creation of Christianity,' and history does not refute the statement. The sense of sin as sin against *God* has been born at the Cross as men have realized what sin did to the eternal Son of God, and what God in Christ did and endured in order to express His condemnation of sin and to overcome it.

4. The act of reconciliation in the Cross was the *act of God*. It was not the outcome of a schism in the Godhead. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son' (John iii. 16). Nor does the power of the Cross lie in the fact that it shows us human nature at its highest in Jesus Christ, offering its best to God—though incidentally it does that. But the

¹ For a discussion of the wrath of God see chap III, p. 72.

² 'The suffering and death of Christ for sinners teaches us the terrible evil of sin and the wonderful love of God' (*Wesleyan Catechism*, p. 5).

Cross derives its saving power from the fact that it was a sacrificial act of God in Christ on behalf of man.

5. The supreme motive of the Cross was *the love of God*. Whatever else some theories have failed to see in the Cross, probably no single theory has entirely missed the vision of grace. Origen and Augustine, Bernard and Abailard, the Reformers and all the modern interpreters would have joined in singing the evangelical hymn:

O 'twas love! 'twas wondrous love,
The love of God to me;
It brought the Saviour from above
To die on Calvary.

6. The Divine love active in the Cross had as its object, not merely individuals, but the whole race. Jesus Christ in the power which He exercises through the Cross has become the Head of a New Humanity. It was not for nothing that the early Christians were called by their contemporaries 'the third race.' They had become a new race, different from Greeks and Barbarians, and from Jews and Gentiles, 'new creations,' 'an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession' to show forth the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. ii. 9). The Cross is therefore the means of the creation of a New Humanity, obedient to new laws, governed by new forces, and manifesting a new collective righteousness.

If the race is to be reconciled to God, the antagonism of contending wills must be overcome. Reason and the ordinary bonds of social life achieve this to some extent, but a radical reconciliation is only brought

about in so far as minds and hearts and wills come under an influence which regenerates and transforms them. Every other apparent reconciliation is superficial. History and experience prove that the only reconciling power which strikes down to the roots of human thoughts and feelings is love and especially the love of God, in which the perverse and conflicting wills of men find a centre of unity, so that being reconciled to God they are reconciled to one another. Love is the explanation of the Incarnation, and love must be the explanation of the climax of the Incarnation, namely the death of Christ. God, out of His great love for us, took upon Himself our nature 'bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows.' It would seem as though in a world such as ours in which 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together,' because of the conflict of contending wills, and in which sin is never resisted and overcome without suffering, the suffering of the Cross was a moral necessity, if the purpose of love which is eternal in the heart of God, and was revealed in the Incarnation, was to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE ancient Hebrews used the term *spirit* (breath or wind) to signify the invisible principle of life, and invisible beings, good or bad. From this beginning Old Testament thought rises to the conception of the Spirit of the one God.

I. THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Spirit of God is synonymous with the divine energy. The Spirit is active in creation (Gen. i. 2; Ps. civ. 30), is the source of intellect in man (Job xxxii. 8), and of special endowments (Gen. xli. 38; Exod. xxviii. 3, xxxi. 3), and is the inspirer of lawgivers, poets, and prophets (Num. xi. 17, 25 f.; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; 1 Kings xxii. 24; Ezek. xi. 5; Dan. iv. 8, v. 11). The action of the Spirit is universal in its range (Ps. cxxxix. 7), but it is specially associated with the redemptive mission of Israel and with the work of the Messiah, upon whom the prophets foresaw that the Spirit would rest in the fullness of strength and goodness (Isa. xi. 2). Ultimately the gift of the Spirit is regarded as moral,

and as securing purity, strength, and penitence¹ (Ps. li. 11; Isa. lxiii. 10 f., Zech. xii. 10). Some of the prophets anticipated a wide extension of the operations of the Spirit of God in the days of the Messianic Kingdom (Ezek. xxxvii. 14, xxxix. 29; Isa. xxxii. 15, xlv. 3, lix. 21; Zech. xii. 10; Joel ii. 28).

In the Old Testament it is often difficult to distinguish between God Himself and the Spirit by which He moves in men's hearts. Nevertheless, the distinction exists. The Hebrew tendency was to think of God as being too majestic and remote for immediate approach and communion. This tendency is illustrated by the rise of belief in hierarchies of angels, intermediaries between men and God. But the belief in the Spirit of God is on a far higher plane, and is characteristic of what was loftiest and deepest in the religious experience of Israel.

2. THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN INTER-TESTAMENTAL LITERATURE

The conception of the Spirit falls rather into the background in apocryphal and apocalyptic literature. The religion of the inter-testamental period is generally held to have been more external and legal than experimental. This was bound to affect the development of an idea so vitally related to experience as that of the Spirit. Moreover, the Scriptures had by now

¹ In the earlier prophets, the Spirit's activity was discerned in the state of *ecstasy* rather than in any moral process, and it was perhaps because they wished to dissociate their calling from the prophetic frenzy that the earlier *writing* prophets rarely claimed to be inspired by the Spirit. But Second Isaiah and Ezekiel gave to the work of the Spirit a moral rather than a physical or psychical meaning, and from their time the Spirit was regarded as 'a moral energy, operating for moral ends.'

become central in the national life. It was felt that the age of prophecy was past. The function of the age, it was believed, was not to seek new inspiration, but to interpret the Spirit-inspired messages of the past.

In the Jewish-Alexandrian book of Wisdom, however, the Spirit of God still seems to be a living idea. 'The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the world' (i. 7). 'For thine incorruptible Spirit is in all things. Wherefore Thou convictest little by little them that fall from the right way' (xii. 1 f.).

3. THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The references to the Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels are naturally scanty, as Pentecost had not yet occurred. (They are more frequent in Luke than in Matthew and Mark.) The Spirit descends on our Lord in His baptism and equips Him for His vocation (Matt. iii. 16; Mark i. 10; Luke iii. 22), with the result that He leaves the Jordan 'full of the Holy Spirit' (Luke iv. 1). He is 'led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil' (Matt. iv. 1; Mark i. 12; Luke iv. 1); that is to say, that in the fellowship of the Spirit He was now constrained to face the problems and perplexities which had to be resolved if He was to fulfil His ministry. After this He returns to Galilee 'in the power of the Spirit' (Luke iv. 14), and in the Synagogue at Nazareth applies to Himself the words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me' (Luke iv. 18 f.).

One or two very significant utterances of our Lord are recorded. He says to His disciples, 'And when they lead you to judgement, and deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak: but,

whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost' (Mark xiii. 11; Matt. x. 20; Luke xii. 12). This seems to harmonize very closely with the teaching of the Fourth Gospel as to the Paraclete.¹ Again there is no forgiveness for those who sin against the Holy Spirit (Mark iii. 28 f.; Matt. xii. 31 f.; Luke xii. 10). Our Lord is speaking of those who charge Him with casting out devils by the power of Satan. To make such a charge is a sign of wilful blindness to the truth. It is to say, 'Evil, be thou my good.' For such a sin there is, in the nature of the case, no forgiveness, because those guilty of it are incapable of receiving forgiveness. This sin against the truth is described as sin against the Holy Spirit. He is not here called the Spirit of Truth, as in the Fourth Gospel, but the suggestion lies on the surface.²

We have to turn to the Fourth Gospel for a more detailed account of our Lord's teaching as to the Holy Spirit. This evangelist teaches, as does his Lord, that the gift of the Spirit was not given to the disciples until after Jesus was glorified (vii. 39). The function of the Spirit is to carry on the work of Christ when He has departed, and to carry it on on a wider scale, and with more far-reaching results (xvi. 7 f.). How is this teaching, that the Spirit could come only after Jesus was glorified, to be reconciled with the fact that the Spirit was recognized to have been active in Old Testament times? The context makes clear that the meaning of the promises recorded by the evangelist

¹ See especially the Lucan form of the saying, 'For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say' (cf. John xiv. 17).

² See also Matt. xii. 28, 'But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you' (cf. Luke xi. 20).

is that the Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth, and whose primary function is *revelation*, will be given to men in greater fullness, and that His revelation will have a larger and deeper content after Jesus is glorified. The Spirit is described as the Paraclete—that is, the Comforter or Helper. He is the agent in the New Birth (iii. 5), and is to interpret the gospel anew to each succeeding age, bringing out the hidden implications of our Lord's teaching (xiv. 26, xvi. 13 f.).

At times it seems as though the coming of Christ in glory is confused with the coming of the Spirit. 'I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you' (xiv. 18). The reference here is probably to the Parousia.¹ 'I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter' (xiv. 16). Plainly the Comforter is distinct from the risen and glorified Christ. But the two ideas are akin. The evangelist is re-stating the doctrine of the Parousia in the light of his experience. The hope of the early and visible return of the Lord is fading, and he would have men realize that Christ comes again in every manifestation of the power of the Spirit. As in the writings of Paul, which we shall review later, the distinction is not sharply drawn between the Spirit and the living Christ, but that the evangelist made the distinction is certain, and the distinction is of such a nature as is possible for us dimly to apprehend. This problem will confront us again when we come to analyse the teaching of St. Paul.

The idea of the Spirit looms large in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The Lord had promised the disciples, 'Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you' (i. 8). The narrative

¹ Popularly known as 'the second coming.'

tells us that the gift of the Spirit came upon them all when they were assembled in one place on the Day of Pentecost (chap. ii.). The chapter describes a profound spiritual experience, the nature of which is not easily apprehended. But the results of the experience are quite evident. There came to the disciples a new sense of the presence and power of God. They were saved from regarding the gospel as a mere compendium of beliefs, or as a code of ethics. Their religion became instinct with energy and power. They knew that they were not the followers of a dead hero, but that their Lord was alive among them in spiritual power. They were welded together into a holy fellowship, and they felt themselves to be endowed with invincible power. They attributed this life-giving transformation to the gift of the Spirit. The Church is simply the organ of the Spirit (xx. 28).

It is in the Pauline epistles that we find the beginnings of a theology of the Holy Spirit. For Paul, the Spirit is that Divine Power which lays hold of our nature and inwardly transforms it. The Spirit stands in vital relation to the new life in Christ. The Apostle's treatment of the doctrine is, therefore, practical and experimental rather than speculative. To read Trinitarian speculations into Paul is to anticipate the thought of a later period. He believed in the Spirit as the agent of the hidden life of God in the soul. He does not seem to have concerned himself with the formulation of a theory of the relation in which the Spirit stands to God and to Jesus Christ. He speaks of the Spirit sometimes as the Spirit of God (Rom. viii. 9; 1 Cor. ii. 11, iii. 16, vi. 11, vii. 40, xii. 3; 2 Cor.

iii. 3; Phil. iii. 3), and sometimes as the Spirit of Christ (Rom. viii. 9; 2 Cor. iii. 17f.; Phil. i. 19).

It is supposed by some that Paul identified the Spirit with the living Christ. It must be admitted that the Christian man cannot *in his experience* distinguish between the fellowship of the Spirit and fellowship with the living Christ. But it does not follow from this that the Spirit and the living Christ are ultimately and fundamentally identical. 'Paul is never tired of insisting that the Spirit reproduces in Christian men the mind and character of Christ. Yet he does not conceive of it as so acting because it is one with Christ and emanates from His personality. His thought is rather that when men have put their faith in Christ a divine power takes hold of them, and transforms them into His likeness. It is the Spirit of Christ inasmuch as He brings it into action, but God Himself sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.'¹

The truth is that, so far is Paul from identifying the Spirit with Christ that he takes the utmost pains to distinguish between them. The very expression 'The Spirit of Christ' is a proof that he did not regard them as identical. Again, the benediction ('The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all'—2 Cor. xiii. 14) is strangely worded if Christ and the Spirit are identical.

By the Spirit, Paul means God as He dwells within

¹ E. F. Scott : *The Spirit in the New Testament*, p. 178. See also A. E. J. Rawlinson : *The N. T. Doctrine of the Christ*, p. 159. 'The risen Christ indwells this Church through the Spirit and that is St. Paul's real thought. The Spirit, as it were, actualizes in the hearts of believers and in the fellowship of the Christian Society, the presence of Christ, who, except in so far as He is thus operative in the Church through the Spirit is regarded as "seated on the right hand of God."''

men, making them conscious of the full moral meaning and power of Jesus Christ. 'The Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Christ, when the content of His operation is considered.'¹ Modern religious writers may not be successful in keeping the two ideas apart, but that they are distinct ideas in Paul's theology (and, indeed, throughout the New Testament) follows from the contentions which we have adduced.

There are passages in the New Testament which recognize the immanence of God or His Word in all men and in all life (John i. 1-9; Acts xvii. 25; Heb. i. 3). But in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is conceived as peculiarly the gift of God to the Church. He works in and through the Church. This must be so if the Holy Spirit is conceived of, not merely as God immanent, but as God immanent in such a way as to bring to the believer's consciousness the full content and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

The early Christians were vague and uncertain as to the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit. The post-apostolic Church followed apostolic precedent in associating the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son. Early baptismal creeds professed faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and early doxologies and hymns glorified the Spirit as well as the Father and the Son. The Spirit was regarded as an object of

¹ Haering: *The Christian Faith*, II, 719.

faith and adoration, yet no early creed or hymn called Him God. Some writers of the second century even showed a tendency to confuse the Spirit with the Son. In 389 Athanasius wrote of some heretics who held that the Holy Spirit is simply 'one of the ministering spirits.' No attempt was made in our Nicene Creed to expound the nature of the divinity of the Spirit. It was simply affirmed that the Holy Spirit is 'the Lord and Life-giver who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is to be worshipped and glorified.' But a council of bishops who met at Rome in 369 affirmed that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are 'of one Godhead, one power, one character, one essence.' 'In no respect do we separate the Holy Spirit, but we adore Him, together with the Father and the Son as perfect in all things, in power, honour, majesty and Godhead.'

Augustine was the first to teach distinctly the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father. The words 'and from the Son' (filioque) which were added to the Nicene Creed in the West in A.D. 589 have never been accepted by the Eastern Church, and form one of the grounds of division. Superficially, at any rate, the difference concerns a theological subtlety which need not greatly concern the ordinary Christian. But it does seem desirable that the Creed should reflect the New Testament teaching that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.



CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

'WHAT is meant by the Holy Trinity? We learn from the New Testament that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three Persons, are one God.'¹ That is a statement of the materials out of which the doctrine of the Trinity has been fashioned. This doctrine is not the outcome of mere speculation. It is an effort to do justice to the facts recorded in the New Testament, namely, that God has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Once these facts were accepted, the Church was bound either to develop a doctrine of the Tri-unity God, or to accept Tritheism (i.e. the belief in three gods). But Christianity is monotheistic;² consequently the Church developed the doctrine of the Trinity in order to safeguard its monotheism.

I. NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

The New Testament attributes divinity to the Son and to the Spirit as well as to the Father. There is

¹ *Wesleyan Catechism*, p. 6.

² Monotheism is the belief that there is one God.

no need to quote again here the passages already given in chapter II., which refer to the divinity of the Son.

Our Lord's teaching concerning the Holy Spirit¹ is recorded mainly in the Fourth Gospel. The Spirit is the agent of the New Birth (iii. 5). He is the Spirit of Truth (xiv. 17), who will interpret Christ (xvi. 14). There are foreshadowings of the same teaching in the Synoptic Gospels. 'It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you' (Matt. x. 20). Christ casts out devils 'by the Spirit of God' (Matt. xii. 28). The Holy Spirit is one of God's good gifts to His children (Luke xi. 13). The teaching of the rest of the New Testament harmonizes with this. It was the Spirit who equipped the disciples for their great enterprise on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 2-4). All the gifts and graces of the Christian life are the fruit of the inward operation of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 1-27; 1 Cor. xii. 3-11; Gal. iv. 6, v. 22-25).

The New Testament, therefore, clearly represents the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as each possessed of divine attributes and fulfilling divine functions, and yet these three are not represented as unrelated to one another. The Son is the Son of the Father, and the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Sometimes the three are all mentioned together, as in Matt. xxviii. 19: 'Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost'²; in the apostolic benediction: 'The

¹ See also chap. VII.

² Although this passage is found in all the manuscripts, its authority is sometimes disputed, on the ground that in the earliest days baptism was into the name of Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus, and not into the Tri-une Name (Acts ii. 38, viii. 16, x. 48, xix. 5). It is suggested that Matt. xxviii. 19 is an interpolation intended to justify later ecclesiastical usage. But if the baptismal formula which had the weight of our Lord's authority

grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all' (2 Cor. xiii. 14); and in Heb. ix. 14: 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God,' &c. The New Testament does not go any further than this in the direction of constructing a doctrine.

II. DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

The early Christians do not seem to have been greatly exercised with the problem of reconciling their belief in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with their traditional monotheism. It was enough for them that they knew all three in their own personal experience, and that yet they were conscious of worshipping but one God. The practical issues which confronted them precluded any devotion of interest to speculative problems. But, in the nature of things, these problems were bound to be faced sooner or later, if only under pressure of criticism by the foes of Christianity. The problem of the Trinity does not seem to have consciously emerged till the third century A.D. But meanwhile much valuable preparatory work had been done in the investigation of the Son's relation to the Father. The second-century writers set forth the co-eternal existence of the Son with the Father, and they used the term *generation* to indicate the going forth of the Son from the Father. This line of thought was further developed by Origen (A.D. 185-254), who speaks of the *eternal generation* of the Son from the essence of the Father.

The first half of the third century saw the rise of what is known as the *Monarchian controversy*. The difficulty was being felt of reconciling the divinity of Christ with the truth of the divine unity. Certain teachers in Rome, the chief of whom was *Sabellius*, held that God is one Person who manifests Himself in three relations or aspects—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus it was the Father who suffered on the cross. Tertullian (died c. 220), the great North African Father, wrote a treatise in reply which had a great influence on the terminology of Trinitarian doctrine. He used the term *substance* to signify divinity and all that is inherent in it. Then he laid it down that three *Persons* may possess this substance on equal

behind it was 'in the name of Christ,' it is difficult to understand how or why it was later universally altered.

The passage which occurs in the A.V.—'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and The Holy Ghost: and these three are one' (1 John v. 7)—is missing from all the older Greek manuscripts, and is almost universally regarded as an interpolation.

terms, though in diverse manners. The Greek theologians ultimately came to use the terms *essence* and *hypostasis* to correspond with *substance* and *person*. Some of the latter emphasized the distinction of Persons rather than the Unity of Substance, whereas Augustine the greatest of the latter Fathers, laid the emphasis on the unity of the substance. The Greeks said 'There are three Persons in one God'; Augustine said, 'There is one God in three Persons.' If we lay down first the unity of the substance, we find it difficult afterwards to account for the Trinity of Persons. If, on the contrary, we lay down first the Trinity of Persons, we shall find it difficult to account for the unity of substance. In the former case we seem to incline to Sabellianism, in the latter to Tritheism.

The official thought of the Church followed Augustine, but popular ideas have always tended in the direction of the Greek teaching; that is, popular conceptions have always leaned in a tritheistic direction. Augustine's teaching is embodied in the so-called Athanasian Creed (fifth or sixth century). This is a Western Creed, but, apart from the statement that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as the Father, it has met with a wide acceptance in the East.

'We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity. Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. . . . The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. . . . There are not three Gods, but one God. . . . And in this Trinity none is afore or after another: none is greater or less than another. But the whole three Persons are co-eternal and co-equal.'¹

III. EXPOSITION OF THE DOCTRINE

1. God is One. There are not three gods, but one.
2. The Godhead is one Being, consisting of three Persons,² Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son is

¹ From this time Trinitarian doctrine does not seem to have been seriously challenged until after the Reformation. The founder of Unitarianism was *Faustus Socinus* (1539-1604), whose views are reflected in the *Racovian Catechism* (1605-9), which asserts that the doctrine of the Trinity is contrary both to reason and Scripture.

² Dr. W. Temple suggests the formula, 'Three centres of One Consciousness' (*Christus Veritas*, p. 117), to which Professor A. E. Taylor proposes as an amendment, 'Three centres of One Activity' (*Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 140).

from the Father by eternal generation, the Spirit is from the Father and the Son by eternal procession. The word 'Person' has a history in this connexion into which we need not enter here. The Fathers sought to steer a middle course between two extremes. On the one hand, they sought to avoid the Sabellian conception of three modes or aspects of the divine Being; on the other hand, they sought to avoid Tritheism. The word Person was, therefore, not used in its full modern sense. But that does not mean that the term is to be emptied of all personal significance.

The Three Persons of the Trinity are 'three divine selfs, who are all acknowledged to be proper Subjects of divine predications, although such predications pertain to but one indivisible Being.' 'Three ineffable Selfs subsist in and possess the one indivisible essence and nature of God.'¹ But, even if we interpret the term 'person' in its full modern sense, 'the self-conscious subject of an experience,' we are not therefore driven back on Tritheism, for, paradoxical as it sounds to us, the Three Persons are one Being. 'The multiplicity is personal; the unity is super-personal.' Lotze said that perfect personality belongs only to God. May it not be that the highest type of personality is tri-personal, i.e. has three self-conscious subjects of experience, whose Being is one? That is, they have absolute community of thought, purpose, and love.

3. The Father is the unoriginate source of the Godhead. The Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

¹ F. J. Hall: *The Trinity*, p. 178.

But only in this sense is there first, second, or third. The subordination of the second and third Persons does not involve an essential inequality, for all three Persons possess the same essence. The three Persons are co-eternal and co-equal.

4. The three Persons equally possess the fullness of the Godhead. Each Person by Himself is God and Lord, and in each Person the other divine Persons exist in inseparable unity, although without confusion of persons. The act of each Person is, in a real sense, the act of all Three.¹

The doctrine of the Trinity is not primarily a speculative doctrine. It is a speculative construction of materials provided by revelation and Christian experience. The definition has stood the test of time, mainly because it is believed that the Church was divinely guided in framing it. But the definition, in its terminology and in its description of processes in the internal life of the Godhead, goes beyond New Testament teaching. These may, of course, be legitimate developments, but it is impossible to deny the speculative elements present. For this reason there are many who, while holding firmly to the Tri-unity of God, think it best to go no further in the way of definition than the use of New Testament terms.²

¹ By the 'Economic' Trinity is meant the Three Persons as they manifest themselves in relation to the world and to man; by the 'Immanent' or 'Essential' Trinity is meant the Three Persons in their relation to each other.

² e.g. John Wesley (Sermon on the Trinity): 'I insist on no explanation at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean that which is given in the creed commonly ascribed to Athanasius. . . . I dare not insist on any one's using the word Trinity or Person. I use them myself, without any scruple, because I know of none better; but if any man has any scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them? . . . I would insist only on the direct words, unexplained, just as they lie in the text.'

IV. ANALOGIES

Different writers have used analogies drawn from Nature and from Human Nature in order to illumine the mystery of the Trinity. Tertullian used the illustration of the root, the tree, the fruit, forming one plant; of the fountain, the river, the stream, water being the one substance; of the sun, the ray, and the terminating point of the ray, light being the one substance. Augustine speaks of the spring, the river, and the cup of the same substantial water; and the root, the trunk, the branch of the same wood. These illustrations are intended to help toward the apprehension of the idea of the procession of the Son and Spirit from the Father. It is doubtful, however, whether they are any real aid to thought in a region where all things go out in mystery.

Other analogies have been used to aid the apprehension of the idea of Three Persons in one Being. Since man is made in the image of God, it is supposed that a reflection of the Trinity may be found in human nature. Augustine finds the image of the Trinity in the human soul, which knows itself and loves itself; in memory, intelligence, and will; in the object that is seen, the vision, and attention of the one who sees. The objection to this kind of analogy, which depends on an analysis of human consciousness, is that it leads to a Sabellian view of the Trinity. We cannot find three persons in consciousness, but only three modes of the one person's activity. We have to accept the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be completely rationalized. Neither argument nor analogy can make it perfectly comprehensible to the reason. The

doctrine is given by revelation, and, being thus given, it may be shown not to be contrary to reason, and even to satisfy some of the most insistent demands of the reason.

V. THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCTRINE

This doctrine has not a merely speculative interest, as is so often supposed; it is of great practical importance. It stands vitally related to the essential truths of the Christian revelation. The following instances illustrate this contention:

1. *The Fatherhood of God.* Christianity teaches that God is 'our Father.' This is not a mere form or figure to suggest His love. It is not a mere synonym for Creator. The doctrine of the Trinity asserts that God is eternally and essentially Father. He is the eternal Father of the eternal Son. Fatherhood, therefore, belongs to the innermost nature of God. The Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God does not depend simply on the fact that our Lord taught us to call God 'our Father.' It is deep-grounded in the eternal essence of God.

2. *God is Love.* The doctrine of the Trinity gives us the most certain assurance possible that God is love. If God's inmost nature is love, He must have loved from eternity. He cannot have waited for an object of love till the process of creation was begun. The doctrine of the Trinity assures us that as God is tri-personal, He does not need to go outside Himself for an object of love. That is to say, God is love, not merely in relation to His creatures, but in

His inmost essence. He is eternally and essentially love.

3. The implications of the doctrine of the Trinity help us to believe in both the *transcendence* and the *immanence* of God. In the Father, we see God transcendent and in the Holy Spirit, God immanent.

4. *Personality as Social.* The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that Personality is to be attributed to God, not as One Person, but as Three. The Personality of God is supreme Reality, and it takes the form of a fellowship of Persons, a communion of will, intelligence, and love, the basal relations of persons not being physical. From this follows the very practical lesson that the way to the perfect realization of personality is fellowship. The One Perfect Personality is a society. Self-realization is through fellowship, through community of will, intelligence, and love. We must lose ourselves to find ourselves.

CHAPTER IX

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE INDIVIDUAL

THE Gospel of Christ is the gospel of *salvation*. Our Lord said, 'The Son of Man came to seek and to *save* that which was lost,' and Paul says that the gospel 'is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth' (Rom. i. 16). But salvation from what? Not merely from the consequences of sin. Only in a limited sense does the gospel save from the consequences of sin. It must be admitted that, even after a man has given himself to Christ, he may still suffer in his body and in human relationships the consequences of his past sins. But the gospel does offer a way of escape from the worst consequences of sin, namely, conformity to the likeness of sin, and alienation from God. The gospel offers man salvation from *sin itself* and from all that hinders him from reaching his highest destiny as one who is called to be a child of God—salvation from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, from death to life, from alienation from God into reconciliation to God. Salvation has therefore a positive and not a merely negative connotation.

The gospel sets before us salvation not as something to be achieved merely by 'rallying the good in the depths of ourselves,' but as the gift and work of God.

'By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God' (Eph. ii. 8). The grace of God may be defined as 'His undeserved love which yearns over all men and seeks to bring them into holy and happy communion with Himself.'¹ The idea of grace is carried a stage further when Paul says, 'God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye . . . may abound unto every good work' (2 Cor. ix. 8). Here grace is God's love energizing within us; it is synonymous with the operation of the Holy Spirit, and to Paul the Spirit 'meant the gracious power of God which evoked faith in Jesus as the crucified and risen Christ, and then mediated to the receptive, obedient life all that the Lord was and did for His own people.'²

Salvation is, therefore, not merely a moral reformation. It is the outcome of a response to the inward energizing of the Spirit of God. But it is none the less a moral process, for it cannot be accomplished without man's consent and co-operation. And yet even this consent is primarily of God, whose grace is already at work in our hearts inclining them to Himself. This is what is called *prevenient* grace.

The psychological process through which a man passes when he experiences salvation is often called *Conversion*. Of recent years psychologists have devoted considerable attention to the phenomena of conversion. They are agreed that it is an experience which cannot be dismissed as a hallucination, but must be treated seriously, and that a parallel ex-

¹ *Wesleyan Catechism*, p. 5.

² Moffatt: *Paul and Paulinism*, pp. 37 f.

perience occurs in non-Christian circles.¹ It is necessary here to draw attention only to two points. It has been a matter of common observation that conversions appear to be of two types, sudden and gradual. But psychological analysis reveals the fact that 'sudden' conversions are usually not as sudden as they appear to be. Behind and underlying the sudden crisis are reflective and emotional processes which have been preparing the way for the 'sudden' intellectual illumination or liberation of the emotions or volitional act. Even a conversion so catastrophic as that of Saul of Tarsus, must have had behind it a long process of reflection upon the inadequacy of Judaism as a way of salvation, and upon the new Prophet of Nazareth and His teaching, especially as brought home to him at the martyrdom of Stephen. Conversion takes place when psychological processes of this kind (the nature of which we shall discuss under the heading 'Experiences leading up to Conversion') are brought to a head, and the great act of surrender to Jesus Christ is made. This may take place suddenly and dramatically, or it may occur quietly, and the transition may pass almost as unnoticed by the experient as his growth in stature.

The other point to which psychologists have drawn attention of which note must be taken here is that it has been observed that conversion takes place most frequently between the ages of ten and twenty-five, and more often still between thirteen and seventeen. But it would be wrong to argue from this that conversion is a mere concomitant of adolescence. What it means is that (as we should expect) the period of

¹ See A. C. Underwood, *Conversion, Christian, and Non-Christian*.

adolescence, when as yet the character is not rigidly fixed, but is more or less fluid, provides the most favourable conditions for the operation of the divine Spirit, who seeks to fashion our personalities according to the Christian pattern. This is also the period of life when other decisive choices (e.g. the choice of a calling) are usually and naturally made.

A. THE HUMAN SIDE OF CONVERSION

I. EXPERIENCES LEADING UP TO CONVERSION

Psychologists say that the pre-conversion stage is marked by the consciousness of a 'divided self.' The self seems to be at war with the self. The problem is how to achieve unification. For many this inner disunity takes the form of *conviction of sin*. There was a time when theologians held that a sense of sin is the *necessary* and *universal* pre-condition of conversion. That it has been so in a great many cases is beyond dispute. But those who preach the gospel do not always find it easy to produce in their hearers a sense of sin. It is certain that it cannot be produced by mere argument, however cogent. Isaiah confessed, 'I am a man of unclean lips' after he had seen the Lord (Isa. vi.). And there is a hint here for the Christian preacher. It is the vision of God in Christ which sooner or later will convict men of their sin. But as a matter of observation (as distinct from theory) it is difficult to deny that this experience in many cases comes later rather than sooner. Every minister knows men who have entered into a genuine experience

of the new life in Christ without any previous deep conviction of sin. It seems to be a fact that in many cases a poignant sense of sin belongs to the higher ranges rather than to the beginning of the Christian life. It is the saint who calls himself the chief of sinners, the reason being that, because his spiritual sensibilities are so awakened and developed, he knows how wide is the gulf between himself and Christ.

For some, conversion is preceded not by conviction of sin, but by a sense of non-attainment, a sense of futility. They are conscious of a 'divided self.' They see the ideal beckoning them on, but they are unable to attain. It is their sense of moral impotence rather than of moral corruption that brings them to a realization of their need of Christ. Others are moved by the conviction that life will be devoid of the highest purpose, if they do not surrender themselves to Christ and live in His service.

2. REPENTANCE

'Repent' is a word which was frequently used by our Lord as well as by John the Baptist. What does it mean? It is to change one's mind for the better; it is to attain to a new outlook on life in which God is central, so that we view our past sins with abhorrence and determine that for the future we will forsake them. To the man who has no deep conviction of sin, but is borne down by a sense of the futility of his life or of his lack of worthy purpose, repentance means such a change of outlook as makes him ashamed of his past futility, and makes him determined that for the future

there shall be a worthier purpose in his life. But repentance is not a purely 'human' process. It is the Spirit of God who convicts us whether of sin or of futility. That is why repentance is never a sorrow unto despair. It is shot through and through with hope. The man who repents knows that there is possibility of amendment, and he resolves to realize that possibility.

3. FAITH

Faith is a term which is used in many senses in the New Testament and out of it. The faith that is a pre-condition of Christian conversion is not mere intellectual assent to certain doctrines. It means an apprehension of Jesus Christ as the revealer of God, and a confident surrender to Him and trust in Him. 'The faith which saves us is such a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as leads us to rely on Him alone as our Saviour, and binds us to Him as our Lord and Master.'¹ But faith is not an attitude which is produced simply by an act of will. Here again the Holy Spirit is at work. As St. Paul said, 'No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. xii. 3).

B. THE DIVINE SIDE OF CONVERSION

It is well to point out here that there is a certain artificiality in the attempt to analyse profound religious experiences and to set them in chronological order. To do so does make for clarity of thought, but we need

¹ *Wesleyan Catechism*, p. 6.

to remember that processes which seem to follow one another may in reality synchronize. The effort to distinguish between the human and the divine aspect of conversion is perhaps vain, since it is impossible to discover any movement of the soul Godward in which the Spirit of God is not Himself at work. But there are certain doctrines descriptive of the work of the Spirit, and based mainly on St. Paul's teaching, which are classic in Evangelical theology. These doctrines demand our consideration, and so long as they are regarded as an attempt to describe vital spiritual processes, and not as a mechanical 'scheme' or 'plan,' they will help us to understand the psychological processes whereby the new life in Christ is realized.

I. JUSTIFICATION

The word which is translated 'justify' in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. iv. 5) is a legal term. It means not 'to make righteous' but 'to declare righteous' or 'to treat as righteous.' It is the verdict of acquittal and is tantamount to forgiveness.¹ According to Paul justification is *by faith*, and Luther declared that according as this doctrine is held a Church stands or falls. The Reformers distinguished between *imputed* righteousness, and *imparted* or *infused* righteousness. They held that, in the act of justification, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to those who cast themselves

¹ According to Roman Catholic doctrine, justification denotes 'the transforming of the sinner from the state of unrighteousness to the state of holiness and sonship of God.' This seems to be equivalent to the Protestant 'sanctification.' Justification is by faith, but such faith as is active in charity and good works and is accompanied by a desire for the sacrament of baptism (see article 'Justification' in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, VIII.).

upon God with faith in Christ and in His reconciling work. Perhaps the best way to express the doctrine in modern terms is to say that when men cast themselves upon God, with a whole-hearted faith in and surrender to Jesus Christ, God looks upon them as 'righteous.' This is no legal fiction. God always looks on the best in us, and the process of becoming righteous has already begun in those who are linked to Christ, and that, not by any work of theirs, but by the working of the Spirit of God.¹ Regeneration is really synchronous with justification.² When God justifies us (that is, pardons and acquits us), He looks no longer on our sinful past, but views us as we are ideally and potentially 'in Christ Jesus.'

The Protestant doctrine is that justification is *by faith alone*, and not by works. That is to say, we come into a right relation with God, by simple faith in Christ, and not through any works of righteousness that we have done. It is a perversion of Protestant doctrine to represent it as teaching that works of righteousness are of no account. Protestant doctrine contends for the right order of thought and experience. If we come into a right relation with God and are inwardly renewed by the Spirit, we shall inevitably bring forth works of righteousness, as the tree brings forth fruit. But meritorious works will never of themselves bring us into a right inner relation with God or into a state of inward renewal.

¹ 'To be justified is not to have the consequences of sin condoned or even obliterated, but so to be reconciled to God in spite of sin, that we can face all evil with confident assurance of final victory over it, and by God's succour transform all its consequences' (Oman: *Grace and Personality*, 2nd ed., p. 221).

² 'At the same time that we are justified . . . in that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit' (Wesley: *Works*, VI., p. 42).

It is sometimes held that St. James (ii. 19-21) teaches the doctrine of justification by works, as opposed to St. Paul's justification by faith. But the contention hardly bears examination. James is not expounding the meaning of justification, but of faith, which is as primary to him as to Paul. He is concerned to make his readers realize that faith which does not issue in works is dead.

2. REGENERATION

This is the term used to describe the birth in the believer of the new life in Christ through the inward energizing of the Spirit of God. The New Testament speaks of regeneration as a fact of experience, but does not explain it. Our Lord referred to it as a fact of experience in his conversation with Nicodemus (John iii.). The same idea occurs in other New Testament writings (1 John ii. 29, iii. 9, v. 1). Peter speaks of 'having been begotten again' (1 Pet. i. 23), and Paul says, 'if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature' (2 Cor. v. 17). He also expresses the same idea under the forms of *resurrection* (Rom. vi. 4 f.; Col. ii. 13; Eph. ii. 5 f.) and *renewal* (Eph. iv. 23 f.).

Jesus Christ is central in the experience of the New Birth. To be regenerated is to undergo a complete change of outlook and disposition and to become conscious of new springs of energy and power—all being due to the transforming power of devotion to Jesus Christ as that is engendered in us by the Holy Spirit. The Fourth Evangelist records our Lord as saying, 'Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God' (iii. 3), and 'Except a man be

born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *enter* into the Kingdom of God' (iii. 5). That is, moral insight and moral action both have their source in the new birth. Unless a man has been quickened by the Spirit, he cannot even discern the realm of ideas and the sphere of life summed up in the expression 'the Kingdom of God.' It is the Spirit, too, who gives him power to rise from lower universes of thought and desire and life to the 'Kingdom of God.'

William James made a great deal of a distinction drawn by F. W. Newman between the 'once-born' and the 'twice-born.' 'Some persons are born with an inner constitution which is harmonious and well-balanced from the outset. Their impulses are consistent with one another, their will follows without trouble the guidance of their intellect, their passions are not excessive, and their lives are little haunted by regrets. Others are oppositely constituted.'¹ The former are the 'once-born,' the latter when regenerated are the twice-born. The two classes are easily recognizable, but it is a mistake to suppose that the 'once-born' do not need and do not experience regeneration. They too, even though they seem to be 'born good,' need the quickening, enlightening, and strengthening energies of the Spirit of God. Because there is no sharp crisis in their inner life, it does not follow that there is no activity of the divine Spirit. 'The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation' (Luke xvii. 20), and not least in the quiet places of the heart.

Psychologists may say that what happens in the new birth is that, by a definite and deliberate act of choice, the will gives a dominant position to one out

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 168.

of two or more complexes¹ which have been in acute conflict with one another, or that a buried complex suddenly rises into the stream of conscious life. But description is not explanation, and the question has still to be faced, how and why it is that a particular 'complex' asserts its supremacy. The answer that harmonizes with the teaching of the New Testament is that it is due to the quickening activity of the Spirit of God. The essential truth of the doctrine of the new birth is not altered when it is translated into modern psychological terms.

3. ADOPTION

This doctrine is based upon the Pauline passage, 'Ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father' (Rom. viii. 15). 'God sent forth His Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons' (Gal. iv. 4 f.).

Paul uses as an illustration the custom of adoption which was prevalent in the Roman world, according to which a stranger could become a member of a family as really as though he had been born into it. We have seen in a previous chapter that all men are potentially sons of God. By justification and adoption they know themselves to be born into the family of God. The doctrine of adoption is a valuable assertion of the great truth that no man is saved unto himself alone, but that his salvation has a social meaning, since he is redeemed into a family or community of which Christ is Head. 'Adoption is the legal term

¹A 'complex' is defined as any 'well-defined system of ideas and emotions created in the mind by the play of experience upon the primary forces of the mind—the instincts' (Tansley: *The New Psychology*, p. 178.).

which St. Paul borrowed from the Roman law to express the social phase of conversion, namely that a saved sinner is not only justified and regenerated, but actually incorporated into the family of God to share its fellowship and to share its destiny.¹

The above are the processes, so far as they can be analysed, which underlie the great experience of conversion. Conversion is in a real sense a miracle—a miracle of grace. There is no room for forgiveness in the realm of Nature. Its inexorable law is, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' But, in the realm of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit breaks into the chain of moral cause and effect, cuts off the entail of the past, reverses the current of the stream, and makes of those who have obtained the forgiveness of sins 'new creatures.'

C. THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONVERSION

I. ASSURANCE

The New Testament teaches that the redeemed can be certain of the forgiveness of their sins and of their filial relation to God. This note of confident assurance is specially prominent in the writings of Paul. 'The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God' (Rom. viii. 16). The Reformers attached great emphasis to the doctrine of assurance. The members of the Council of Trent were divided on the subject, and stated that while we ought not to doubt the mercy of God, yet owing to human infirmity

¹ O. A. Curtis: *The Christian Faith*, p. 367.

we may have 'fear and apprehension.' The Westminster Confession regards assurance as an ordinary gift of the Spirit to the believer though he may have 'to wait long and contend with many difficulties before he be partaker of it'; but once gained it cannot be lost. John Wesley's greatest service to theology was the prominence which he gave to this doctrine in face of much opposition and misunderstanding. He took his stand on the Pauline doctrine of the *witness of the Spirit*. For Wesley assurance of sonship is not a mere deduction of the reason, neither is it a conclusion drawn from Scripture on the ground that the conditions of acceptance by God have been fulfilled. Assurance is a divinely begotten conviction. 'The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out and I, even I, am reconciled to God. . . . The manner how the *divine* testimony is manifested to the heart I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me: I cannot attain unto it.'¹ Wesley, unlike the Calvinists, taught that this inward assurance may be lost. In his old age, he did not hold that the enjoyment of the inward witness was necessary to salvation. He wrote, 'When fifty years ago my brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, taught the people that, unless they knew their sins were forgiven, they were under the wrath and curse of God, I marvel they did not stone us.'

¹ Sermon X.

It is impossible to exaggerate the sense of joy and power which the experience of assurance brings to the Christian life.

‘The doctrine of the witness of the Spirit is an attempt to conserve the great truth that what is essential to religion is not ritual or credal orthodoxy, but an experience of God in the soul. When we say “the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,” we mean that the phenomena of Christian experience are not self-originated, but are brought into being by the power of God. Our consciousness of the forgiveness of sins, of our filial relation to God and of our fellowship with Him, of the new life which He brings to birth within us, of the grace which He gives us in times of temptation, and of the comfort wherewith He blesses us in days of sorrow—these are not the product of our own imagination and feeling, but are the fruits of the literal indwelling of Christ within us.’¹ It is a mistake to suppose that the experience of assurance necessarily makes for pride or self-centredness. On the contrary, it should emphasize the social aspects of personality, for one of the primary elements in assurance is the consciousness of incorporation into a new society, the society of the redeemed, of those who are consciously striving to live as sons of God.

2. SANCTIFICATION

Wesley rendered a great service by insisting that conversion is not the end but the beginning of the response to the gospel call, and that the justified and regenerated must press on after holiness of life.

¹ H. M. Hughes: *The Theology of Experience*, pp. 49 f.

Evangelical Christians have often forgotten this truth and have fallen into *antinomianism*.¹ Sanctification is, of course, the teaching of the New Testament. Our Lord prayed for His disciples, 'Sanctify them in the truth: Thy word is truth' (John xvii. 17). Some other passages which point the same way are, 'Present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification' (Rom. vi. 19); 'Follow after . . . the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord' (Heb. xii. 14). Sanctification is both negative and positive; it involves both deliverance from sin and holiness of life. It is progressive; it is not fully achieved in the hour of conversion, but is reached from stage to stage. 'Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Pet. iii. 18). It is the fruit of the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Such marks of holiness as 'love, joy, peace' are the 'fruit of the Spirit' (Gal. v. 22 f.).

This is the point at which Christian ethics might come in for discussion as a department of Christian theology. But it is important to point out that holiness, while it includes, is something more than obedience to the ethical demands of the gospel. This does not mean that Christian ethics may be ignored by the Christian theologian or preacher. On the contrary, there is no more urgent need than that Christian men should think out the ethical implications and applications of the gospel. But holiness is some-

¹ This is the name given to the tendency to make light of the moral and spiritual demands of the gospel because of the magnitude of the grace of God. It is the tendency against which Paul is protesting when he says, 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid' (Rom. vi. 1. f.).

thing more than obedience to the stern law of Christian duty. The crucial element in the idea of holiness is not any philosophical or ethical theory, but the cultivation of the fruit of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The *starting-point* of the life of holiness is not so much a particular moral ideal or end, as fellowship with the Spirit of Holiness, which is the Spirit of God and of Christ. Holiness is better described as 'the fruit of the Spirit' than as the product of moral faithfulness.

3. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

One of Wesley's main contributions to theology was his teaching that there is a sense in which Perfection (or *Entire Sanctification*, as it is sometimes called) can be realized in the present life. This is, of course, the teaching of Paul, though it has been largely lost sight of. He uses the term *perfect* in a relative sense. There is a perfection of the bud and a perfection of the flower—a perfection which is compatible with progress. In Phil. iii. 12 he says 'Not that I am already made perfect: but I press on.' Later on in the 15th verse of the same chapter he says, 'Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.' He is contemplating two different stages of perfection. But when he says that he proclaims Christ 'that we may present every man perfect in Christ' (Col. i. 28), he is evidently thinking of the higher ranges of perfection. Paul uses expressions which make it difficult to evade the conclusion that he taught that it is possible for the Christian to

reach such a state of perfection that he does not willingly fall into any known sin. There is no suggestion here of freedom from liability to err in moral judgement, but such passages as the following undoubtedly point to such a state as has just been indicated: 'I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me' (Phil iv. 13); 'The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess. v. 23).¹ Wesley's teaching does not seem to go further than that. He says that there is no perfection in this life such as implies 'a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood.' His definition of a *perfect Christian* is 'loving God with all our heart and mind and soul.' It can hardly be denied that perfect love is a goal which the Christian man must aim at reaching even in the present life. To be dominated by and permeated with the constraining love of Christ is surely not an ideal which ought to be beyond the reach of the Christian man. The

¹ The following is Dr. Vernon Bartlet's summary of Paul's teaching: 'There is a state possible to Christians . . . in which they can be described as "unblameable in holiness" and into which they may be brought by the grace of God in this life. Therein they stand, hallowed through and through every part of their being, abiding by grace in a condition fit to bear the scrutiny of their Lord's presence without rebuke. . . . It is this state of realized sanctification of conduct that St. Paul has constantly in view in exhorting his converts to holy living. . . . But the conception needs to be carefully guarded and explained by other aspects of his thought. (1) It represents a growth in holiness rather than into holiness out of something else. (2) It is conceived as realizable by a definite act of faith—claiming and appropriating its rightful experience by an act of will informed by the living energy of the Holy Spirit—rather than as the cumulative result of a slow, instinctive process after conversion. (3) It is not the same as absolute moral perfection or consummation, but is rather the prerequisite to its more rapid and steady realization' (art. 'Sanctification': *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, IV., p. 393).

following is a summary of Wesley's teaching on this question¹:

1. The name which Wesley gives to the experience of holiness is '*Christian perfection*' or '*Scriptural perfection*.'

2. Such perfection means only a *relative* perfection in *conduct*. Bodily infirmities often cause men to think, speak, or act wrongly.

3. Such perfection means only a *relative* perfection in *character*. The holier men become, the more do they feel 'their own ignorance, littleness of grace, coming short of the full mind that was in Christ, and walking less accurately than they might have done after their Divine Pattern.'

4. Nor does such perfection mean freedom from actual *temptation*. 'There is no such perfection in this life as implies an entire deliverance from actual temptations.'

5. Wesley avoided the phrase *sinless perfection*.

6. To be a perfect Christian is nothing other than being perfect in love towards God and man.

7. This experience is achieved instantaneously. 'I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a single act of faith; consequently in an instant. But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following, that instant.' At the time of a man's conversion 'the Holy Spirit sets before him' the more excellent way, 'and incites him to walk therein, to choose the narrowest path in the narrow way, to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness—after the entire image of God. But if he does not accept

¹ I have followed in the main the analysis given by Professor O. A. Curtis in his valuable work, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 377 ff.

the offer, he sensibly declines into the lower order of Christians. He still goes on in what may be called a good way, serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the close of life through the blood of the covenant.'

There is little in this summary to evoke dissent, save perhaps the suggestion that this experience is always realized *instantaneously*. But it should not be overlooked that Wesley allows that the crisis is both preceded and followed by a process. And this teaching is psychologically sound. Psychological processes usually work up to a climax. It is not unreasonable to suppose that a man who has pondered long on the meaning of the Christian life, and has had a deep experience of the grace of God, should in one 'hour of insight' become fully conscious of the might of the resources which the gospel places at his disposal, and should there and then will the task, which may be fulfilled through hours of temptation and struggle.¹

This is a part of its commission to which Methodism is not bearing adequate witness. There is need to sound anew the note that there are no limits to the possibilities of growth in the Christian life and that Christian men and women should not be satisfied with moral and spiritual mediocrity. The expression 'entire sanctification' is capable of a wider application than has commonly been given to it, namely, the sanctification of social life in every part, the baptism of all departments of life into the Spirit of Christ, and the bringing of every sphere and relation-

¹ Tasks in hours of insight willed

May be through hours of gloom fulfilled—MATHEW ARNOLD.

ship of life into the captivity of His obedience. This also is to be achieved by Perfect Love.

THEORIES OF PERFECTION

Note may be taken here of some other theories of perfection in the present life.

1. *The Ascetic Theory of Perfection.* Such theories usually adopt the distinction between 'counsels of perfection' (e.g. chastity, poverty, and obedience), which are incumbent on the elect few who are called to the life of holiness, and what are called 'evangelical precepts,' which are incumbent on all Christians. This distinction is based on our Lord's words to the rich young man: 'If thou wouldest be perfect' (Matt. xix. 21). But these words do not afford a legitimate basis for such a moral dualism as is suggested. The particular duties of individual Christians may vary according to circumstances, but our Lord set the same ideal of perfection before all his followers.

2. *Roman Catholic Doctrine.* It is held to be possible for one who is justified to keep all the commands of God. But a distinction is drawn between 'venial' sins (sins of infirmity, or unpremeditated sins into which the will does not enter) and 'mortal sins.' Venial sins, it is believed, do not detract from perfection.

3. *Quaker Doctrine.* 'In whom this holy and pure birth is fully brought forth the body of death and sin comes to be crucified and removed and their hearts united and subjected unto the truth, so as not to obey any suggestion or temptation of the evil one, but to be free from actual sinning and transgression of the law of God, and in that respect perfect. Yet doth this perfection still admit of growth; and there remaineth a possibility of sinning where the mind doth not most diligently and watchfully attend unto the Lord' (*The Confession of the Society of Friends*, 1675).

The defect of theories which regard the instantaneous realization of Christian perfection or 'full salvation' as 'the second blessing' is that 'it is plainly unscriptural to suggest that any "second blessing" can confer on certain Christians a higher *kind* of sanctification than the holiness which flows essentially from justifying faith, or bestow a new grace of spiritual infilling "distinct from or additional to" the gift of the Holy Ghost granted in conversion and regeneration' (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VI., p. 749).

D. CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM

The Reformers were so deeply impressed by Augustine's teaching of salvation by grace alone that they took over other elements in

his teaching, including the total corruption of human nature and absolute predestination. According to Augustine, election to eternal life is not conditional on faith; on the contrary, the elect are predestinated to be the recipients of faith. The rest are left to perish. The number of the elect is fixed. Grace is therefore irresistible in the case of the elect; they cannot fall away, but have the gift of *final perseverance*.

Calvin developed these ideas with a stern and rigorous logic. He held that by an eternal decree some are ordained to life and some to damnation. This election is not in any way conditional on the faith or character of the individuals concerned, it is grounded solely in the sovereign will of God. 'That the reprobates might come to their destiny, God robbed them of the opportunity of hearing His word, or blinded and hardened them by the preaching of it, for many became still blinder through the light of Christ, and still deafer through His Voice. Why did God do this? . . . Whatever God wills is to be deemed righteous because He wills it.'¹ Some of Calvin's followers held that the divine decrees of election were pronounced *before* the Fall, and included this event in its scope. Some held it was pronounced *after* the Fall. The former were called *Supralapsarians* and the latter *Infralapsarians*. It is not quite clear which Calvin himself was, as he speaks ambiguously on the subject. The objection that it is useless to invite all men to respond to the gospel call, if God will only receive a chosen few, is met by Calvin with two sayings of Augustine: 'Wilt thou dispute with me? I would have you, rather, wonder with me and exclaim, "O the depths!" Let us both agree to fear lest we perish in error'; 'Since we know not who the elect are, it becomes us to desire in our hearts the salvation of all.' *Luther*, too, declared predestination to be unconditional, including the lost as well as the saved. He believed that men's wills are so impotent through corruption that nothing but the irresistible grace of God, working through election, could save any. In spite of this, however, Luther taught that God desires the salvation of all men and that if any are not saved it is because they refuse the gospel invitation.

About the beginning of the seventeenth century, *Arminius*, a Dutch theologian, led a revolt against these principles of Calvinism. In 1610 the Arminians issued a *Remonstrance*, in which they contended:

1. Election is conditional and is dependent on God's foreknowledge of men's faith.
2. Christ died for all men.
3. Men cannot exercise saving faith unless they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
4. Grace, while indispensable to the Christian life, is not irresistible.
5. The Final Perseverance of all believers is very doubtful.

¹ Dorner; *History of Protestant Theology* I., pp. 397 f.

The Synod of Dort, 1618, condemned all five articles, and adopted the *infralapsarian* form of the doctrine of predestination. *John Wesley* described himself as an Arminian, and contended strongly against the doctrines of Calvinism. He held that Christ died for all men; 'that although there may be some moments wherein the grace of God acts irresistibly, yet in general, any man may resist, and that to his eternal ruin, the grace whereby it was the will of God he should have been eternally saved'; and that a 'true believer may make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, that he may fall so as to perish for ever.'

E. THE EVANGELICAL SUCCESSION

The term evangelical was first applied to the adherents of the Reformation. In the eighteenth century it was used to describe the clergy who preached the doctrines of the Revival. It has gradually come to be used as the opposite of 'Catholic.' It indicates particularly those doctrines which relate to the redemptive work of Christ and to the operations of the Holy Spirit of God, though it must be admitted that in this sense many 'Catholics' are 'evangelical.' But the term is further used to describe those conceptions of the Church, the Ministry, and the Sacraments, which bring them into dependence on the gospel rather than vice versa. It is generally agreed that the four great spiritual ancestors of evangelical religion are Paul, Augustine,¹ Luther, and Wesley. 'Each of them illustrates the unity of doctrine and experience which makes a living theology. These cardinal witnesses to the gospel of God stood at four great junctures in religious history—Paul at the transition from Jewish to Gentile Christianity; Augustine at the passage from the Roman Empire to the Middle

¹ Augustine was a man of many-sided mind. 'Catholicism' found support in him no less than Evangelicalism.

Ages; Luther at the heart of the Protestant Reformation; Wesley at the spring of the Methodist Revival.¹

The starting-point of the theology of each was neither in philosophy nor in dogma, but in his own inner religious experience.

Paul made coherent the connexion between the Jesus of history and the heavenly Christ. He set them in their right relation to one another by identifying them. It was he who first worked out in a developed form the relation between the facts of Christian experience and those of the historic revelation in Jesus. When Paul fastened upon the consciousness of the growing Church the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was one with the pre-existent heavenly Christ, he freed it for ever from the danger of regarding Jesus as a mere Rabbi, simply a teacher of a new way of righteousness. Paul's thought began with the question, How can a man appear righteous before God? He believed man to be in bondage to sin, unable to free himself either from its guilt or its power. He had found that while the Law brought the knowledge of sin, it left men impotent to realize the ideal which it embodied. It was along this path that Paul approached Christianity. The revelation of God as being not an arbitrary Taskmaster, but a Father who is full of grace and desires men to be reconciled to Him—this revelation lifted the burden from his soul, and showed him how man might be justified before God. The proof of the divine grace is in Jesus Christ, whose death, resurrection, and ascension are an assurance of the forgiving love of God. Because of this, he is able to say, 'There is therefore now no

¹ Dr. G. G. Findlay at the Methodist Oecumenical Conference, Toronto, 1911.

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' When we cast ourselves in faith on Christ, we are not only reconciled to God, but we open our hearts to His regenerating power, so that germinally we are new creations. There is still much in us that is unrighteous and which can only be overcome by progressive sanctification, but the new life born within us has such transforming power, that, ideally and potentially, we are already conformed to the image of His Son. We are not justified by keeping the Law; we keep the Law because we are justified.

Augustine re-discovered and re-affirmed these aspects of Pauline teaching. The absorption of the Church in controversy had led to the obscuring of the doctrines of grace. Augustine restored them to their proper place. His theology was the product of his religious life. His insight sometimes failed him, because of his inability to shake off past influences which still clung to him. As a result his system embraces many conflicting tendencies, and he became the starting-point of systems which afterwards found themselves in violent antagonism. Both Catholic and Evangelical trace their ancestry to him. But despite this conflict of ideas the great fact remains that Augustine showed men how they might attain to an assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as the Revealer of the grace of God.

The Reformation was not in the first place a theological or ecclesiastical movement, but a religious revival. Luther was conscious that God's forgiving love in Jesus Christ had redeemed him, apart from any merit of his own; that was the germ-cell of the

Reformation. He thought not so much of the heinousness of sin, as of the awfulness of the divine wrath; that is, the idea which dominated his spiritual quest was salvation from wrath more than present salvation from sin. He counted himself a saved man, because God had forgiven him for Christ's sake. The important fact was that Luther stood for the validity of inward assurance, as opposed to that which was sacerdotally mediated. The condition of acceptance with God, as Luther conceived it, is faith. This is the human response to the revelation of divine love in Jesus Christ. But it is not the outcome of any effort of our own; it is the gift of God. Justification is therefore by faith and by faith alone. Meritorious works are the free and spontaneous product of this experience and not a condition of its birth. Luther, as Harnack has said, 'set up the evangelical faith in place of dogma.'

Wesley returned to Paul more completely than either Augustine or Luther. Because, unlike them, he was not tied to the doctrines of predestination, he was able to preach the gospel of the *universal* grace of God, without involving himself in theological inconsistencies. In contending for the universality of God's grace and the freedom of all men to respond to it, Wesley extricated the gospel from a metaphysical entanglement which was limiting its power, and brought the Church back to the certainties of religious experience which Paul had verified and expounded.

As Dr. G. G. Findlay wrote, 'Augustine dwelt with predilection on the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, on the seventh, and on the ninth to the eleventh; Luther revelled in the para-

graphs extending from the third to the fifth; John Wesley understood the sixth and eighth as scarcely an interpreter before him.' Now chapters six and eight are those in which Paul emphasizes the moral renewal that accompanies the assurance of forgiveness in the act of justification. The thought of the moral and spiritual renewal which accompanies the disclosure and acceptance of God's grace in Christ runs through all Wesley's teaching. His doctrine of Christian Perfection is simply a statement of the depths of the grace of God which, beginning with pardon and moral renewal, carries on its perfect work by the sanctifying energies of the Spirit.

Finally, Wesley rescued faith from dogmatic and ecclesiastical entanglements. Augustine and Luther each became the source of narrowing as well as of liberating influences. Wesley reached a higher stage of emancipation. He regarded forms and ordinances as 'smaller points,' and he held that 'orthodoxy is at best but a very slender part of religion if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all.' His supreme concern was with what he conceived to be the *facts* of the New Testament revelation, rather than with the forms in which those facts might be stated and explained. He believed that the Christian life begins, not in subscription to a creed, but in obedience to the heavenly vision of God's love in Jesus Christ; and that right thinking is more likely to follow on a genuine Christian experience than vice versa. It is not for experience to force itself into the iron moulds of dogma, fashioned in bygone ages; it must rather create its own mould of plastic material which shall expand with the growth of Christian life and thought.

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH, THE MINISTRY, AND THE SACRAMENTS

THE idea of the Holy Spirit as carrying on the work of Christ on earth demands, to complete it, the idea of the Church. Christianity is based on an historical revelation. If this is to be not merely a tradition attested by documentary evidence, but a living experience in the hearts of succeeding generations there must be a community of witnesses who guard the traditions and experience the operations of the living Spirit. This community of witnesses is the Church.

A. THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH

Did our Lord found the Church? The answer to this question depends very much upon the meaning which is attached to the word *Church*. The word is attributed to our Lord only twice in the Gospels—in each case in Matthew (xvi. 18: 'Upon this rock I will build My Church,' and xviii. 17: 'If he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the Church'). The Greek word in the text is *ecclesia*. But Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic, and it is difficult to tell what was the word which He used. Many scholars deny the authenticity

of both passages¹ and hold that they belong to a date when the Church was already an organized body. But it is certain that the term *ecclesia* was in very early use among christians and from this it may be deduced that our Lord probably used its Aramaic equivalent. We must, however, be careful not to read into *ecclesia*, at this early stage, the sense which it acquired in subsequent ages. There are some who contend that our Lord gave to His disciples a definite form of Church organization, and that this organization is a vital part of the christian gospel. But the evidence which is adduced in support of this contention is very unconvincing. We should not expect that He who said that His words were 'spirit and life' would legislate on questions of organization. His method seems to have been to gather disciples around Him, to inspire and instruct them, and to equip them for the task of preaching the gospel. That some kind of organization would be necessary He must have foreseen, but He left His disciples to shape their own organization according to needs and circumstances, and as the Spirit should direct them. The New Testament throws some light upon the forms of organization which the early Church assumed under the direction of the apostles, but, if the Church is (as we have contended) the organ of the indwelling Spirit, even these forms cannot be regarded as perpetually binding. The Church must always be free to modify its organization to meet the needs of a changing world, according as she is led by the living Spirit of God.

¹ xviii. 17 almost certainly refers to the Jewish Church. 'The actual precept is hardly intelligible if the *ecclesia* meant is not the Jewish community; apparently the Jewish local community to which the injured person and the offender both belonged' (Hort: *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 10):

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

(1) THE CHURCH OF THE EARLIEST DAYS

This is described in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The organization is very simple. It was a fellowship of brethren, who practised a limited kind of communism (ii. 45). 'They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers' (ii. 42). At first membership of the Church involved no break with Temple and Synagogue. The Church was of the nature of a society within Judaism (ii. 46), as the early Methodists were originally a society within the Church of England. The leaders of the little community were the Twelve, and especially Peter (i. 15-26). They were, however, not dictators. When it was necessary to appoint new officers to serve tables, 'the multitude of the disciples' were taken into consultation, and the appointments were made by them (vi. 1-6). This incident makes clear that the organization was gradually developed in response to new needs and changing circumstances. The conditions of entrance into the new community were repentance, accompanied by baptism 'in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins' (this implies faith in Christ), and followed by 'the gift of the Holy Ghost' (ii. 38).

(2) THE PAULINE CHURCH

The idea of the Church underwent great and rapid development owing to the missionary expansion under

the leadership of the Apostle Paul. This is described in the later chapter of Acts and in the Pauline epistles. The Church is the whole community of Christians or a part of it.

1. Usually the nucleus of the Church was the congregation which met in a private house (Acts xii. 12, xx. 8, 20, xxi. 18; Philem. 2; Col. iv. 15; Rom. xvi. 5). The term *ecclesia* was applied to these separate congregations.

2. *The City Church*. In course of time it became impossible to accommodate in one house all the believers in a particular city. The result was that in some cities there were several house-congregations. There appear to have been held occasionally united meetings of all the congregations in a city (Acts xv. 30; 1 Cor. v. 4, xiv. 23; 1 Thess. v. 27; Col. iv. 16). The group of house-churches in a city was called *ecclesia* (1 Cor. i. 2).

3. The term *ecclesia* is also applied to *the whole company of believers* (1 Cor. x. 32; Col. i. 18). The whole Church is regarded as functioning through each house-church.

4. *The Ideal Church*. There are passages in which St. Paul seems to lose sight of the Church as it is and to think of it only as it is ideally—that is, as it ought to be and is destined to be. The ideal Church is to judge the world (1 Cor. vi. 2). The conception of the ideal Church is most highly developed in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the metaphors of the Building, the Body, and the Bride are used to illustrate it.

Principal Lindsay finds five outstanding elements in the New Testament conception of the Church of Christ.¹

¹ *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, chap i.

1. The Church is a *fellowship*—a fellowship with Christ and with the brethren.

2. *It is a unity.* The unity is ideal rather than manifest and visible. But that does not mean that it is not real. Because the members of the Church are united to Christ, their common Head, they are in a real sense united to one another by community of faith and experience and purpose. For the unity to be real there is no necessity for it to be realized in one visible organization. This may be said without minimizing the injury wrought by 'the unhappy divisions' of Christendom, for these arise even more from lack of unity of spirit than from differences of creed and organization. Our Lord's words in His High-Priestly prayer are frequently misinterpreted in this connexion: 'That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us' (John xvii. 21). Obviously the unity here contemplated is unity of spirit rather than of external organization. Indeed, visible unity need not depend on unity of organization. There is room within the one Church of Christ for diversities of organization, each making its contribution to the life of the whole fellowship. Organizations are likely to approximate to one another according as unity of spirit is achieved, and not vice versa.

3. *The Church is a Visible Community.* There can be no doubt that in the New Testament the Church is a visible community, with a developing organization. It is not merely a mystic fellowship of those who share a common ideal. The ideal Church of which St. Paul speaks may not yet have attained complete or perfect embodiment. But it becomes partially visible in, and

functions through, each separate community of believers. These separate communities are welded into a unity according as each is diligent 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. iv. 3).

4. *The Church has Authority.* It has powers of oversight and discipline to be exercised upon its members. Above all, it has authority 'to declare unto all men, being penitent, the remission of their sins through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.'

5. *The Church of Christ is a Priestly Society.* Hostility to the exaggerations of sacerdotalism should not blind us to the essential truths which it contains. The priest represents man to God and God to man. In this sense the Church exercises priestly functions. But it is the whole Church, and not any particular caste within it. The New Testament teaches *the universal priesthood of believers*. This does not preclude the Church from setting men apart for the work of the ministry. But the minister is the agent and mouthpiece of the whole Church, whether he is preaching the Word or administering the sacraments.

(3) DEFINITIONS OF THE CHURCH

In the light of the above considerations we may proceed to record some definitions of the Church which harmonize with them.

'Wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church' (Ignatius: *Ad. Smyrn.*, c. 8).

'Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace' (Irenaeus: *Adv. Haeres.*, iii. 24).

'Accordingly, where there is no joint session of the ecclesiastical order, you offer, baptize, and are a priest alone for yourself, for where three are there the Church is, although they be laity' (Tertullian: *De exhortatione castitatis*, 7).

'The Church of Christ is the whole company of those who accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour' (*The Catechism of the Wesleyan Methodist Church*, p. 8).

'We believe that God wills fellowship. By God's own act this fellowship was made in and through Jesus Christ, and its life is in His Spirit. We believe that it is God's purpose to manifest this fellowship, so far as this world is concerned, in an outward, visible, and united society, holding one faith, having its own recognized officers, using God-given means of grace, and inspiring all its members to the world-wide service of the Kingdom of God. This is what we mean by the Catholic Church. The vision which rises before us is that of a Church, genuinely Catholic, loyal to all truth, and gathering into its fellowship all "who profess and call themselves Christians," within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole body of Christ. Within this unity Christian Communion now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled' (Lambeth Resolutions, 1920, I. and IV.).

These definitions are all valuable, but those are defective which do not make clear that the Church is a fellowship in the Spirit. The Church is the fellowship of the redeemed, informed and sustained by the indwelling Spirit of God.

(4) THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The term 'saints' is used in this connexion as applied in the New Testament to all the redeemed. The term has come to bear a particular significance in reference to those who have departed this life. Death does not separate the redeemed from the Church, because it does not separate them from Christ, the Head of the Church. The Church on earth is the *Church Militant*, the Church above is the *Church Triumphant*. As Charles Wesley wrote:

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

The Church has always held that there is a real communion between the redeemed on earth and the redeemed above. Because both are in fellowship with Christ, they are in a real sense in communion with one another.

(5) THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

In the writings of Paul, the idea of the Church largely takes the place of that of the Kingdom of God, which dominates the Synoptic Gospels. The visible

Church is the Kingdom in process of being realized, and the invisible Church is the ideal of the Kingdom. But Christian thought has always recognized a definite distinction between them, though it is not easily drawn.

1. The Church is the agent for the extension of the Kingdom. It is both narrower and wider than the Kingdom. There may be those inside the Kingdom who are outside the Church, and those inside the Church who are outside the Kingdom.

2. The Church ought to be a microcosm of the Kingdom. The Church becomes the model or embodiment of the Kingdom in so far as it exemplifies the Christian spirit and way of life.

3. The Kingdom includes those aspects of human life called 'secular,' which the Church, as an organization, does not attempt to include.

4. The ideal Church is the perfected Kingdom of God. When the Church shall have gathered into itself all who recognize themselves as God's children, and shall have baptized all institutions and relationships into the Christian spirit, then the kingdom of the world will have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

(6) DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

So long as the apostles lived, the Church was able to function with a comparatively loosely-knit organization. They were a centre of authority, and therefore a cementing influence. But when the apostles had passed away, the need for authority became apparent, and as a result the organization was tightened up. This necessary development was hastened by the conflicts of the Church with *Gnosticism* and *Montanism*. *Gnosticism* was at the height of its influence from about A.D. 135 to 160, although its operation was manifest both earlier and later than these dates. It was an amalgam of Oriental mysteries with Jewish-Christian ideas. The great facts of the gospel revelation were resolved into myths. Matter

was regarded as evil, and the God of creation as inferior to the God of redemption. Salvation was through a mystical knowledge imparted to the initiate by the Gnostics, who claimed that they were the repositories of secret traditions of the teachings of Jesus. Gnosticism was for some years a serious menace to the Church, as it found many points of contact with the mind of the age, and tended to bring Christianity into conformity with widespread contemporary ideas.

Montanism was a movement which had its rise within the Church. Its emphasis was upon the work of the Holy Spirit. Montanus declared himself to be the chosen organ of the Holy Spirit, and asserted that the end of the age was fast approaching. Apart from its extravagance of doctrine, Montanism was a liberating movement. It aimed at leading the Church back to the prophetic 'Spirit-filled' life of earlier days. It was a protest against all secularizing tendencies, and against the growing weight of organization, which seemed to fetter the prophetic spirit.

Face to face with these two challenges, the Church closed its ranks. It had to meet the claims of the Gnostics that they were the repositories of secret apostolic traditions, and to combat the anarchic individualism, of the Montanists. Gradually the Church developed its defence along three lines. (1) *The Development of the Episcopal Office*. The steps in this development will be traced later, in the section on 'The Ministry.' It will suffice to state here that in the second century A.D. the monarchical episcopate emerged. The Church's reply to the Gnostics was that all the genuine Christian traditions were known to the bishops, who were able to trace the line of their succession back to the apostles. To whom should these traditions be known, if not to them? (2) *The Apostolic Creed* and (3) *The Apostolic Writings*. What we call 'The Apostles' Creed' was known at Rome in its earliest and rudimentary form between A.D. 150 and 175. As we have already seen, the authority of certain Apostolic Writings was recognized in the second century A.D., and the Canon of New Testament Scripture was beginning to shape itself.

These were the credentials of the true Church. Those who did not accept the authority of the Apostolic Creed (The Rule of Faith) and the Apostolic Writings, and who had not the authentic episcopate, were outside the Church. Here we have the germs out of which the Catholic¹ Church developed. By A.D. 200 the main lines of the organization of the Catholic Church were laid down. As a German writer has said, 'About 50, he was of the Church who had received baptism and the Holy Spirit, and called Jesus Lord; about 180, he who acknowledged the rule of faith (and) the New Testament Canon and the authority of the bishops.'²

¹ The word Catholic means universal. It was used of the whole Church as distinct from schismatic bodies, and gradually came to mean 'orthodoxy as opposed to heresy, and conformity as opposed to dissent.'

² Quoted by W. Walker: *A History of the Christian Church*, p. 60.

One of the most powerful influences in developing this doctrine of the 'Catholic' Church was Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who lived about A.D. 200-60. He conceives of the Church as one visible orthodox organization, linked together by the episcopate. 'He who is not in the Church of Christ is not a Christian.' 'He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother.' 'There is no salvation outside the Church.' 'The Bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop, and if any one be not with the bishop, he is not in the Church.'

About this time, too, a sharp distinction came to be drawn between the clergy and the laity, and the word 'priest' was applied to the Christian presbyter, in the Jewish or pagan sense.

The conversion of Constantine (about A.D. 311) and the Edict of Milan (313) brought the Church under the protection of the State, and, therefore, into close association with it. The influence of Constantine was felt in the councils of the Church. For the time being this immensely strengthened the 'Catholic' Church, since the Emperor lent no countenance to heretics and schismatics, but ultimately this association of Church and State gave rise to problems and controversies, which even yet are not wholly solved or settled. It will be convenient to refer here to two documents, which, although now proved to be forged, exercised for centuries a deep influence on the development of ideas of the Church.

The Donation of Constantine. This document was promulgated about the eighth century. In it Constantine orders all ecclesiastics to be subject to the Pope, and transfers to the successive occupants of the Roman see the overlordship of the Western half of the Empire. The document was proved to be a forgery about the middle of the fifteenth century.

The Forged Decretals. These were foisted on to the Church about the middle of the ninth century, and were not exposed till after the Reformation. Like the 'Donation of Constantine,' they were designed to buttress the extreme claims of the Papacy, and fulfilled their purpose until they were exposed.

But we have anticipated the development of events. From the earliest times the Roman Church occupied a certain position of pre-eminence. Rome was the capital of the Empire. Both Peter and Paul were said to have died there. It came to be believed that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, and our Lord's promise to Peter was applied to his successors as well. For these reasons, Rome gathered prestige, and it was natural that disputes should be submitted to her for arbitration, and that she should exercise what Ignatius called 'a presidency of love.' But this did not satisfy the Roman bishops, and they began to claim supremacy of jurisdiction, and gradually they made good their claim in the West. Leo I (440-61) procured an edict from the Emperor ordering all to obey the Bishop of Rome as the successor of St. Peter. It was he who first laid supreme stress on Matt. xvi. 18 as conferring authority on the bishops of Rome. Not content with claiming

spiritual jurisdiction, the bishops of Rome claimed temporal jurisdiction.

The theologian whose influence did most to establish the 'Catholic' doctrine of the Church was *Augustine*, Bishop of Hippo (354-430). For him the Church is the hierarchically organized Church under the pre-eminence of Rome. He came to regard the Church as the sole sphere of salvation and as the sole mediator of divine truth and grace. There was, however, another side to his teaching, which fell into the background until the Reformation. He conceived of the Church as spiritual and invisible, the congregation of the 'elect' saints. This is a smaller body than the ecclesiastical body. The latter includes 'tares' as well as wheat. The sacraments only convey grace to the elect, and have no efficacy for the non-elect. These are two contradictory strains of teaching, but Augustine was a man of many-sided mind, and there is a sense in which it may be said that he is the source from which springs the stream of the Reformation as well as that of Roman Catholicism.

The Middle Ages saw the steady consolidation of the Western Church as a hierarchical and authoritarian institution, through whose ministries and sacraments salvation could alone be found. The Papacy consolidated its position. Both theologians and ecclesiastics were agreed in this policy. *Hildebrand* (Gregory VII, 1020-85) claimed that the Pope was universal Bishop, with power to depose or reinstate all other bishops. He also claimed for the Papacy supreme temporal authority—that is, the power to make and to unmake kings or emperors. He aimed at nothing less than a universal theocracy, with the Pope at its head. *Thomas Aquinas* (1225-74), the great scholastic theologian, argued that there can be only one Christian Church, and that as each diocese recognizes one bishop for its head, so the whole Christian people needs one head for the whole Church—that is, the Pope.

John Wyclif (1369-1415) and *John Hus* (1324-81) raised opposing voices, but their protest seemed of little avail at the time, though it was later made effective by the Reformers. Even in what might be called orthodox circles of the Church the supremacy of the Pope was not universally admitted, and the *Council of Constance* (1414-18) declared that General Councils have power derived directly from Christ over the whole Church, and that all, even popes, are bound to obey them. We have traced here only the development of the doctrine of the Church in the West. The formal separation from the East came in 1054. It will be convenient to summarize later developments under three heads (a) Reformers, (b) Roman Catholic, (c) Eastern.

(a) THE DOCTRINE OF THE REFORMERS

The Reformers brought the idea of the Church into close relation with that of the gospel. They found the Church wherever the gospel

is preached and the sacraments administered. The Church is the communion of those who are united to Christ through the preaching of the gospel. The Reformers will have nothing to do with the converse conception of union with Christ through union with the Church. The 'power of the keys' is authority to proclaim the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. The Church does not depend upon the clergy for its continuity, but upon the continued preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments. The clergy are simply the organs through whom the universal priesthood of believers functions. Because of the corruption of the Church as it was, the Reformers emphasized the spiritual and invisible Church¹—the ideal Church of the Pauline epistles—the Church to which all who have experienced the forgiveness of sins belong. But this did not mean that they denied the reality of the visible Church. This exists wherever the Word is truly preached and the sacraments are duly administered, and there is a sincere effort after holy living. The visible Church is an imperfect manifestation of the invisible Church. But the Reformers held that the unity of the visible Church is to be realized in unity of spirit, and not necessarily in unity of external organization. These ideas, variously expressed, underlie the theology of all the Protestant Churches. In the Anglican Church, however, there began in the nineteenth century an influential reaction against the Reformation doctrine of the Church. The Tractarians taught (1) that there can be no true Church apart from the Apostolic Succession of bishops. (2) That the Eucharist as administered by priests in the Apostolic Succession is the supreme channel of divine grace to men. (3) That the decisions of the councils of the undivided Church are to be accepted without question. Nonconformist communions are therefore not true Churches, though they may be the recipients of the 'uncovenanted mercies of God.' This movement (now known as Anglo-Catholic) has exercised, and is still exercising, a very powerful influence in the Church of England.

(b) THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

This is based on the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–63) and of the Vatican Council (1870). It is substantially the same as that of mediaeval times. The most notable development is the formal assertion of Papal Infallibility at the Vatican Council, though it is held that this was implied in earlier belief and teaching. The Church is regarded as a complete, permanent, and ordered society, 'a body of men united together for the profession of the same Christian faith and by participation in the same sacraments, under the governance of lawful pastors, more especially of the Roman Pontiff, the sole

¹ A similar distinction is drawn by Roman Catholic writers who differentiate between the 'body' and the 'soul' of the Church, the former being the visible organization and the latter the aggregate of all the just, known to God alone, and united in the Holy Spirit through grace.

vicar of Christ on earth.' This definition rules out multiplicity of Churches and a variety of ministries. By 'lawful' pastors is meant those who are in the Apostolical Succession. The bishops in this succession are not merely duly ordered officers, but channels of grace. The Vatican Council (1870) asserted the supreme jurisdiction of the Pope over the whole Church, 'not only in things which pertain to faith and morals, but also to the governance and order of the Church scattered over the whole world,' and that the Roman Pontiff, 'when he speaks *ex cathedra*, is endowed with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be instructed in the defining of doctrine as touching both faith and morals; and that on this account the definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves—and not by virtue of the consent of the Church—irrevocable.'

The claim that the Church is pre-eminent over the State is now interpreted to mean that where duties conflict 'God is to be obeyed rather than man.'¹ But if the voice of the Pope is synonymous with that of God, even such a simple statement may have mischievous implications.

The doctrine that 'outside the Church there is no salvation' is modified by the admission that 'those who without fault of their own are not members of the body of the Church, may nevertheless belong to its soul, provided they seek to know the truth, possess faith and charity, and are contrite for the sins they have committed.'

(c) THE EASTERN DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

'The Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of the East' consists of fourteen autonomous Churches, which have a common faith, government, and basis of worship. 'She is called *Eastern* because she is geographically the antithesis of the West, of which Rome was the centre. She is called *Apostolic* as having been founded by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word and having received through them the seed of the gospel; for indeed the Orthodox Eastern Church, by means of an uninterrupted hierarchical chain, has her roots in the very foundations of Theophany.'² She is called Orthodox because she claims that she is the depository of true doctrine, as opposed to the aberrations of Rome. She is called 'Catholic' because 'she is not limited to any place nor time nor people, but contains true believers of all places, times, and peoples.' The 'Orthodox' doctrine of the Church may be gathered from the following quotations from its official Catechism (1839):

'The Church is a divinely instituted community of men, united by the Orthodox faith, the law of God, the hierarchy, and the sacraments.' 'The Church, though visible, so far as she is upon earth, and contains all Orthodox Christians living upon earth, still

¹ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, III. 629.

² Callinicos: *The Greek Orthodox Church*, pp. 1 ff.

is at the same time invisible, so far as she is also partially in heaven, and contains all those who have departed hence in the true faith and holiness.' There is unity between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven, 'by their common relation to one Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by mutual communion with one another.' The Orthodox Church alone 'has the sublime promises that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her and that the Lord shall be with her even to the end of the world.' 'We undoubtedly express as sure truth that the Catholic Church cannot sin, nor can she utter falsehood in place of truth; for the Holy Ghost, ever working through His faithful ministers, the fathers and doctors of the Church, preserves her from all error.' The hierarchy of the Orthodox Church proceeds, 'From Jesus Christ Himself, and from the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles; from which time it is continued, in unbroken succession, through the laying on of hands in the Sacrament of Orders.' The one body whose authority is supreme over the whole Church is an Oecumenical Council. General Councils cannot err.

B. THE MINISTRY

By the Christian ministry is meant the body of officers duly recognized and authorized for the fulfilment of certain functions, such as ministering the Word and the sacraments, the spiritual oversight of the flock of Christ, and the administration of its temporal affairs.

I. DID OUR LORD ESTABLISH AND PROVIDE FOR THE PERPETUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY?

We have already expressed the opinion that our Lord prepared His disciples to carry on His work when He should be taken from them, but that He left the interests of His Kingdom in the hands of a 'band of brothers' rather than in those of a fixed organization. If that was the case, we should expect that, while the apostles would naturally take the lead in the teaching and government and extension of the infant Church,

there would as yet be no universally binding rules of Church government, and therefore no *official* and *legal* ministry. But this is a matter which leads us on to highly controversial ground.

2. TWO CONFLICTING VIEWS

On the one hand, 'Catholics' (Roman, Eastern, and Anglican) contend that even before Pentecost there existed officers in the Christian society appointed by Christ, and put in trust of the ministry of the Word and of grace as a whole. These were the apostles. They in due time appointed their successors, and the practice has been continued through an unbroken line of bishops to the present day. This is what is called the doctrine of the *Apostolical Succession*, which, according to Bishop Gore, 'must be reckoned with as a permanent and essential element of Christianity.' On the other hand, the Protestant Churches contend that Christ did not lay down rules for an organization; that the authority and influence of the apostles sprang naturally out of the fact that they had been personal companions of the Lord; that the Church gradually developed the ministry in accordance with its growing needs; that the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession is, as John Wesley said, 'a fable,' and that there is a valid, real, and regular ministry of the Word and the sacraments, where men give themselves to the work of the ministry in response to the inward call of the Spirit, as that is attested by the Church. The minister, so called and attested, is held to be the representative, or agent, acting on behalf of the whole priesthood of believers. His functions are delegated functions.

The difference between the two views is sometimes put thus. It is said that in the one case the authorization is 'from above,' in the other 'from below.'¹ It is not denied that in both cases the call may be 'from above'—that is, from the Spirit of God. But authorization to minister which can be traced along the line of the succession back to Christ Himself is described as 'from above,' whereas authorization by the living Church is described as 'from below.' When properly understood, the distinction is not without its advantages for purposes of discussion.

3. THE MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The most important point to be noted is that in the New Testament the essential qualification for the ministry is to be 'filled with the Spirit.' We are not to conceive of each local Church as having a minister in charge of it from the beginning. The early assemblies for worship were not unlike a Quaker Meeting or a Methodist Class-meeting, where each speaks as the Spirit moves him. In so far as there was an official ministry, we can distinguish two classes of ministers: (1) Those who gave themselves to the ministry of the Word; (2) Those who gave themselves mainly to practical administration, called 'serving tables,' e.g. the seven deacons (Acts vi. 1-6), but even these must be men 'full of the Spirit.' Those who gave themselves to the ministry of the Word may be called the *Prophetic Ministry*. This included three classes:

¹ The question may be put in another way. Did the Church spring out of the ministry or the ministry out of the Church?

1. *Apostles*. Their distinguishing characteristic was that they had dedicated their lives to missionary preaching. They were not appointed to an *office*, but to a work. The term 'apostle' was not limited to the eleven; it was applied to Paul and to many others (e.g. Barnabas, Acts xiv. 14; *vide* also Rom. xvi. 7) who were conscious of the inward call of the Spirit to a life of missionary service. The apostles are not represented as having any *official* authority. The Eleven, of course, had a unique personal influence and authority, because they had known Christ after the flesh; and a similar authority attached to Paul, both because of his outstanding spiritual experience and of his personal gifts. It may be said, indeed, that even those who were numbered among the apostles, in the wider sense of the word, exercised a considerable personal authority over the Churches which they founded, but this authority was *personal* and not *official*. And probably in most cases, as in that of Paul, this authority was only exercised in so far as it carried with it the assent and consent of the community.

2. *Prophets*. The prophets (i.e. preachers, not fore-tellers) were 'Spirit-filled' men who proclaimed and interpreted the 'Word of God' as the Spirit gave them utterance. The prophet did not break new ground. He found his sphere of service within the Christian communities established by the apostles. The prophet was not a mere teacher, who expounded the oracles of the Lord. He was a man of insight and intuition, of magnetic personality, who brought the new truth into relation with the old, and applied it to the needs of his hearers. Prophets were not office-bearers in the Church, though it might happen

that an office-bearer might also be a prophet. They were not ordained to their work. They were men who had responded to the call of the Spirit, and were recognized by the Christian communities as having the gift of prophesying to which they laid claim. They, like the apostles, eventually exercised a considerable authority over the early Christian communities.

3. *Teachers*. They were not necessarily office-bearers. Primarily they were men who had received from the Spirit the gift of instructing. They were repositories of the oral traditions of the teaching of Jesus, and it was their task to impart to their fellow-believers a knowledge of the truths of the gospel. We are not to suppose that these men were *appointed* to the office of teaching. What happened was that men who found themselves possessed of the gift exercised it with the tacit approval of their fellow-believers.

Apostles, prophets, and teachers all exercised an *itinerant* ministry. In the nature of things there grew up also a *localized* ministry, concerned mainly with questions of administration. We can see the beginnings of this local ministry in the New Testament. There were two main classes of officials—presbyters or elders (sometimes called bishops), and deacons. The *Elders* had the oversight of public worship and the care of the philanthropies of the Church. They were the guardians of the Church's orthodoxy, both in faith and in morals, and it was their business to arbitrate when disputes arose between Christians. But the elders did not take complete control of public worship as does a minister to-day. The congregation itself took charge of praise and prayer, and even of

the preaching, unless there should happen to be a prophet or teacher present. *Deacons* acted under the superintendence of the elders, and found their chief sphere of service in the philanthropic work of the Church.

These local ministers were set apart to their office by the laying on of hands. Later on, some of the Fathers held that the gift of the Spirit was imparted through the act of laying on of hands. But the rite which was taken over from Judaism was not originally held to have any such significance. 'In none of these instances of laying on of hands is there any trace of a belief in the magical virtue of the act. It is simply the expressive and familiar sign of benediction, inherited by the apostles from the synagogue and adapted to the service of the Church.'¹

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY

The spread of Christianity, the passing away of apostles and eye-witnesses, the growth of independence of the local Churches, and the rise of heresy, led inevitably to the strengthening of the local ministry. The Church had reached that stage in its development when, in the interests of unity and consolidation, the need of rulers appeared to be greater than that of prophets. The result was that the old prophetic ministry declined in influence, and became subordinate to the local ministry. We have seen that, when confronted with schism and heresy, the Church replied that the only authentic traditions of the gospel were attested by those officers (bishops) who could show that they stood in an unbroken succession from the days of the apostles.² These officers were therefore

¹ Swete: *Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, p. 384. A 'Catholic' writer would, of course, put an entirely different complexion on the New Testament evidence on the question of the ministry from that which has been put above. I can only say that the attempt to find support for 'Catholic' conceptions of the ministry in the New Testament seem to me very far-fetched and unconvincing. (But see Gore: *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, pp. 45 ff., 136 ff.)

² Irenaeus (d. 202) held that because of their position these men had 'a grace of truth.'

regarded as the guardians and the judges of orthodoxy, and this put the prophets in a position of subordination. Towards the beginning of the second century we find that each Christian community has a threefold ministry. The term bishop is no longer synonymous with elder, or, rather, he is the presiding elder, and now occupies a distinct office as the pastor of the Church. Associated with him, but under him, are *Elders* and *Deacons*, with their own differing functions. As the local churches drew more closely together, bishops (or presiding presbyters) of outstanding gifts began to exercise a presidency over all the churches of their locality and the monarchical episcopate was evolved. This is the position which is reflected in the letters of Ignatius (about 110), the bishop is given an exalted position, although the conception of the office is not yet sacerdotal. By the end of the second century the supremacy of the bishop was universally established and recognized, and by this there was attached to his office the ministry of the Word as well as the administration of the sacraments and the affairs of the Christian community.

The congregation generally elected its own bishop, the ordination being usually carried out by a neighbouring bishop, with the assistance of the elders, though it might be done by one of the elders of the congregation.¹ The bishop acted in all respects as pastor of the flock. He presided at the Lord's Supper, but could delegate these functions to an elder. The growing need for discipline within the Church in face of persecution, and the need for presenting a united front to the Empire, combined to consolidate the position and power of the episcopacy. In the third century, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (d. 258), asserted the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession in a very uncompromising form. According to him, episcopacy is in no sense derived from the Christian community. It is received from heaven, being transmitted from God to Christ, and from Christ to the apostles, and from the apostles to the bishops, their successors. They are, therefore, responsible only to God. The bishop is necessary to the Church, and where there is no bishop there is no Church. The unity of the whole Church is guaranteed by the communion of the bishops with one another. It follows from this that the body of bishops constitutes the essence of the Church.

Cyprian's *sacerdotal* views were also in advance of those of his predecessors. Because the bishop is the representative of Christ in the congregation, he is their high priest. The Lord's Supper now becomes a sacrifice. The bishop has priestly authority to remit sins. The Roman claim that the Pope should be regarded as Bishop of Bishops, though repudiated by Cyprian, was a natural development of his line of thought. The ideas of Cyprian were still further developed by Augustine (d. 430), and from his time down

¹ See Lindsay: *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, p. 246.

to the Reformation, conceptions of the ministry steadily developed on sacerdotal lines.¹

The change from the parochial bishop to the diocesan bishop was one of the results of the re-organization of the Church as a consequence of Christianity's union with the State under Constantine.

5. REFORMATION DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY

Luther held that the ministry of the gospel is not a priesthood, in the sense that the minister's functions are independent of those of the universal priesthood of believers, but an *office* of the Church for the administration of the Word and the sacraments. In fulfilling these functions, ministers are the representatives or executive officers of the whole congregations, and, through the congregation, of Christ who has called them. The same position was taken by Calvin. He held that the right to set apart as its minister a man whom it approved as being called of God belonged to each congregation. His chief contribution was to restore to the laity a position in Church government which they had not held since the first century. He gave them a place of equal authority with the clergy in Church courts, and laid the foundations of that happy co-operation of ministers and laity which has characterized many of the Protestant Churches. The Reformers (with some exceptions) followed the lead of Luther and Calvin. They took the general ground that the ministry of the Word was more important than that of the sacraments, that

¹ As regards the Apostolical Succession, it is worth noting that whereas in the early Church the succession was regarded as passing from holder to holder of the episcopal office, and as guaranteeing the continuity of the Church, emphasis is now placed on succession from consecrator to consecrated, and the idea put in the foreground is not so much continuity as transmission of grace.

Christ did not impose on the Church any ministerial system, sacerdotal or otherwise, and that the Church was free to make its own arrangements, according to changing circumstances and as led by the Spirit of God. For this reason the Reformers were not opposed to episcopacy as such. Although most of the Reformed Churches dispensed with episcopacy, some of them (e.g. the Anglican and the Swedish) retained it.

6. THE METHODIST DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY

The Methodist Church began as a society within the Church of England, and for this reason was slow in developing a Church-consciousness of its own. It has never formulated a doctrine of the ministry in definite terms. All that can be deduced from the standard documents is that bishop and presbyter are synonymous terms in the New Testament and that ministers are not to regard themselves as having a right to dictate to their people as to matters of faith and practice, but they are to be 'helpers of their joy by helping them forward in faith and holiness.' A doctrine might, however, be constructed out of the following elements of belief, which have the authority of widespread conviction and usage.

1. The first essential for the work of the ministry is that a man feels himself inwardly called thereto by the Spirit of God.

2. If he is to exercise his ministry in the Methodist Church, he must be approved by the duly-constituted Church courts, the tests applied being 'gifts, graces, and fruits.'

3. While sacerdotal authority is disclaimed, it is held that as a *matter of order* there shall be committed to the minister sufficient authority for the discharge of his functions.

4. A high doctrine of the ministry is quite compatible with the disavowal of sacerdotal claims. The minister discharges a priestly office as the representative of his fellow-members of the universal priesthood of believers. While he is approved and authorized to minister in his own communion by his fellow-members, yet his authority to minister the Word and Sacraments, is not derived from them, but from Him who called him to be an ambassador, beseeching men on behalf of Christ.

C. THE SACRAMENTS

A sacrament is sometimes defined as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.' It may be any outward medium through which we apprehend unseen realities. This is the meaning of the saying that all Nature and all life may be sacramental. But in Church usage the word has a narrower meaning, and is referred to rites which are supposed to have a particular value for the apprehension of the unseen through sensible forms. The Roman and Greek Churches recognize seven—baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, marriage. The Reformers recognized only two—those held to have been directly instituted by our Lord—Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and their teaching has been followed by the Protestant Churches, with the exception of the Quakers, who recognize no

sacraments at all, or, rather, would say that all life may be made sacramental. It may be pointed out, however, that the preaching of the Word equally fulfils the conditions of the definition. Spoken words, no less than rites and symbols, may be a means of apprehending the unseen.

I. BAPTISM

I. DID OUR LORD INSTITUTE BAPTISM?

No one, of course, contends that our Lord *originated* the rite of baptism. It was observed by John the Baptist. Ceremonial cleansing with water was an idea familiar to Judaism, and, indeed, proselytes were admitted into the Jewish Church by baptism. The question before us is, Did our Lord lay hold of this rite and enjoin it on His followers with significance of its own? The answer can hardly fail to be in the affirmative. To most Christians Matt. xxviii. 19 would seem to be conclusive, but some scholars contend (on insufficient grounds, as it seems to the present writer) that the words are a later interpolation, and therefore not an authentic utterance of Jesus. But, without entering into this particular controversy, we may ask, How did baptism establish itself so firmly in the Early Church, if not instituted by Christ? It seems to have been the universal practice of the Church from the first days, and even Paul (1 Cor. i. 17), who says that he was sent, not to baptize, never seems to have challenged it as the rite of initiation into the Christian Church. There is no sign of any controversy

on the subject in the early Church, nor is it known that there was any Christian community in which baptism was not the rule. The conclusion seems inevitable that behind the rite was the authority of Christ.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament, and particularly in the Pauline writings, baptism is represented as the sacrament of regeneration. It has been asserted by some that Paul attached a magical significance to baptism—that is, that it was not only a symbol of inward cleansing, but actually produced this inner change. But there is no adequate ground for this contention. To Paul, baptism was the sign and the symbol of an inner spiritual process brought to pass by faith in Christ. Because baptism was the outward sign of the believer's incorporation into the community of believers, it became inseparable in thought from his experience of regeneration. 'Salvation is made to hang, not on participation in any sacrament, but on the Word of God, received in faith.'¹

3. THE PERSONS BAPTIZED

As baptism was the sign of initiation into the Christian community, following on repentance and the conscious acceptance of Christ, it was in New Testament times administered only to adults by immersion. The references in the New Testament

¹ W. Morgan: *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, p. 212.

to the baptism of Households do not bear the construction often placed upon them. There are only three cases mentioned (Acts xvi. 15; Acts xvi. 33; 1 Cor. i. 6, cf. xvi. 15), and the context leaves it very doubtful whether there is a reference to children. Infant baptism does not seem to have come into use till the second century.¹ Until parents were brought to Christ, and Christian homes were formed, there was no room for infant baptism, except on the theory that the rite had a magical efficacy.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

Sacramentarian² ideas seem to have found their way into the Church at a very early date (Acts xxii. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 29). This was probably due to the influence of the mystery religions, of which ablutions were a conspicuous feature, such lustrations being regarded as in themselves a means of regeneration. Gentiles converted to Christianity could hardly fail to colour their new beliefs with those in which they had been brought up. That is, of course, not to assert that these ideas were deliberately introduced into Christianity by men of such spiritual insight as the first apostles. Paul's emphasis on faith and moral renewal shows that he combated magical ideas of baptism with all his power. At any rate, whether derived from the mystery religions or from some other source, by the end of the second century mechanical notions of baptism had gained considerable ground. It was held that the rite of baptism brought forgiveness of sin, regeneration, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is not to be assumed that all Church teachers were blind to the perils of magical ideas. On the contrary, they emphasized the moral requirements of the gospel.

Infant baptism is first mentioned by Irenaeus (d. 202), and was usually held to cleanse from original sin. It came to be believed that unbaptized infants are excluded from heaven. Augustine, in his later period, made baptism absolutely necessary to salvation. Infants who die without being baptized 'will be involved in condemnation, but of the mildest character.' The whole tendency of

¹ The practice did not become general till the fifth century.

² By Sacramentarianism is meant those theories according to which a sacrament is efficacious in itself, apart from the disposition of the participant, e.g. baptism *in itself* cleanses from sin. The term Sacramentalism is applied to theories of the sacraments which, while exalted, do not go so far as to attribute to them a semi-magical efficacy.

Augustine was to emphasize the intrinsic efficacy of the ritual act. During the Middle Ages sprinkling was substituted for immersion in the West. The Roman Catholic doctrine of baptism is built on the foundation laid by Augustine. Baptism is not merely a sign of spiritual grace; it is an effective cause of it. The Council of Trent decreed that the guilt of original sin is removed by baptism, that there is no salvation without baptism, and that baptism is the instrumental cause of justification (i.e. sanctification).

For the Reformers the sacraments ceased to be central. They are simply one means of grace among others. To Luther the sacraments are nothing but 'a peculiar form of the saving word of God,' and Calvin places the sacraments in the same category as prayer, the study of the Scriptures, and preaching. The Reformers did not, therefore, regard the sacraments as communicating a grace that could not be otherwise mediated. That is, they did not regard any sacrament as necessary to salvation.

The leaders of the Reformation, however, differed in their interpretation of the meaning of baptism. The Lutherans took it to mean regeneration. The Zwinglians interpreted it merely as a recognition of discipleship. The Calvinists took a mediating view, and held that baptism is not merely a sign of grace, but in some respects an actual gift of grace.

5. THE MODERN PROTESTANT VIEW OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

There are many varieties of view within the various Churches which practise infant baptism, but most would agree that the following elements are present in baptism:

1. It is a declaration that the child is already Christ's.
2. The parents dedicate their child to Christ and to His Church, and vow to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This means that they also dedicate themselves.
3. The Church which witnesses the rite, and receives the child 'into the congregation of Christ's flock,' solemnly undertakes the responsibility of caring for the child in the years to come.

4. Many hold the Calvinistic view that in baptism an actual gift of grace is imparted to the child—a gift which becomes effective in later years. Many others, however, hold that the rite does but symbolize the grace which God will give to the child.

5. In later years it is a means of conscious blessing to the baptized child to remember the sacrament of his initiation into the visible Church, and to recall the vows made by his parents on his behalf.

2. THE LORD'S SUPPER

I DID OUR LORD INSTITUTE 'THE LORD'S SUPPER'?

Most Christians believe that our Lord instituted a rite at His last supper with His disciples. But what rite? Because He instituted the 'Supper' it does not follow that all the meanings which have been read into that rite were intended by Him. It is difficult to see how the 'Mass,' can establish its claim to legitimate descent from the Upper Room. There are four accounts of the institution of the Supper in the New Testament (Matt. xxvi. 26-29; Mark xiv. 22-25; Luke xxii. 17-20; 1 Cor. xi. 23-26). There is no reference to the institution of the rite in the Fourth Gospel. It is, however, held by many that John vi. is to be interpreted in the light of the Supper. This chapter certainly moves in the same circle of ideas, but there is no record of the historical institution of a rite. The chapter is an illustration of 'mysticism without sacrament.'

It is a fair presumption that the rite which Christ

instituted should be interpreted in the light of the Supper and of the words of institution as recorded by the evangelists and Paul, and not in the light of sacramentarian ideas which entered the Church at a later date. The conclusions which we draw from the narrative are that the Supper was instituted by our Lord, and intended by Him to be repeated. The present writer does not think that our Lord imposed the rite on His disciples as a legal ordinance, but rather that the institution of the rite, with the command to perpetuate it, is to be regarded as the appointment of a trysting-place. If the 'Catholic' contention were true that this rite is the most crucial and essential thing in the gospel, we should expect it to occupy a very prominent place in the New Testament, whereas it is not mentioned by any of the New Testament writers except the Synoptics and Paul. And even Paul does not regard it as of the essence of the faith.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IN THE INSTITUTION-NARRATIVES

1. It was meant to be a perpetual commemoration of Christ's sacrificial death.

2. It was intended to be a means of communion, and it has therefore fittingly come to be called the *Holy Communion*. Through this rite the disciples were to experience real fellowship with their Lord. The bread and wine were taken as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. The rite was a dramatic representation of the life of union with Christ. Further, the Supper was conceived as the covenant-meal of

the new dispensation, in which, as in other covenant-meals, fellowship was established between the members of the covenant and their head, and also with one another.

3. It was a pledge that Christ would come again, and the sacramental experience was a foretaste of a fuller and deeper fellowship with Christ in His consummated Kingdom.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

It is certain that the Lord's Supper was celebrated by all the Churches of the Apostolic age. What significance did they attach to it? The question is not easy to answer, as there was then no clearly formulated theory. Certain ideas were associated with the rite—the strengthening of the soul against sin, the commemoration of the sacrificial death of Christ, the unity in Christ of all who partook of the rite, thankfulness for the fruits of the earth,¹ the hope of immortality. Very soon ideas crept in from Jewish or pagan sources, which in course of time entirely transformed the meaning of the simple rite of the Upper Room. These ideas arose out of prevailing conceptions of sacrifice and out of the notion that certain ritual acts of themselves conveyed grace, apart from the disposition of the participant. At an early date the term *sacrifice* was applied to the Supper, which had now come to be called the *Eucharist* (i.e. thanksgiving). It is a thank-offering of the first fruits of the earth. At this stage the sacrifice is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Gradually the idea gained ground that the material elements of bread and wine, while a symbol, were also something more, and in the fourth century the idea emerged of a change in the elements on consecration. The Eucharist now came to be spoken of as a sacrifice offered by the priest. The sacrificial idea is transferred from the service as a whole to the consecrated elements. The sacramental sacrifice is a repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross. In the sixth century the Eucharist is called 'a sacrifice of propitiation and praise.' In 844 *Paschasius* wrote a treatise in which he contended that the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ. The term *transubstantiation* was first used by *Hildebert of Tours* (early in twelfth century). The Lateran Council (1215) affirmed, 'His body and blood are really contained in the sacrament of the altar under the species of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into the Body and the wine into the Blood by the power of God.' This has remained the doctrine

¹ *Didache*, x.; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, IV. xvii. 5, xviii. 4.

of the Roman Church. According to the Council of Trent, 'If any one shall deny that in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist there is contained truly, really, and substantially, the Body and Blood along with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the whole Christ; but shall say that the Presence is symbolical or is a figure; let him be anathema.'¹ At the Council of Florence (1439) the doctrine of transubstantiation had been accepted by representatives of the Eastern Church as well as by those of the West. Roman Catholics resent the suggestion that the doctrine of transubstantiation means that the communicant eats and drinks the flesh and blood of Christ *physically*. They make much of the scholastic distinction between *substance* and *accidents*. Substance is that which exists in itself, and is a support for the accidents, which are the qualities of matter (e.g. colour, taste, &c.). Underlying the bread and the wine is a mysterious something called substance, and it is this which is changed into the flesh and blood of Christ. The accidents remain unchanged. The following statement of the doctrine was approved by Cardinal Newman, as being in harmony with official Roman pronouncements: 'According to this doctrine the substance of the bread and wine is converted into the substance of the very flesh and blood of Christ, so that all communicants literally and substantially partake of His flesh and blood.'²

4. THE DOCTRINE OF THE REFORMERS

The doctrine of the Reformers as to the Lord's Supper took three main directions.

I. *The Teaching of Luther* repudiated the Roman doctrine of the Mass, but attached great importance to the Eucharist. His doctrine of the elements is known as *consubstantiation*. The bread and wine remain bread and wine, but after the consecration the actual flesh and blood of Christ co-exist in and with the bread and wine, just as a heated iron bar still remains an iron bar, though a new element, heat, co-

¹ The Council of Trent took note of the fact that there had come to be two distinct rites, the Eucharist and the Mass (i.e. the sacrifice). It issued a 'Decree concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist' and stated the 'Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass.'

² Barbour: *Life of Alexander Whyte*, pp. 243 f. See Council of Trent, Session XIII., Canon 2.

exists in and with it. This connexion is not permanent, but pertains only to the act of communion. Luther did not strengthen his view by associating with it a doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body.

2. *The Teaching of Zwingli.* Zwingli regarded the Eucharist as a memorial of our Lord's death, the bread and wine being the signs of the broken body and shed blood, and also as an act of renewed union with Christ (who is spiritually present) through faith, bread and wine being seals of this union. The type of thought which regards the Supper as a purely commemorative rite is commonly called Zwinglian. But this does not seem to be just to Zwingli.

3. *The Teaching of Calvin.* Calvin emphasized the idea of the real spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The bread and wine are signs of the body and blood of Christ, but they are not mere signs; they are instrumental means of His presence. Because Christ is present in the Eucharist, it is a means for deepening our union with Him.

Most of the Protestant Churches hold to one or other of these three types of doctrine (especially 2 and 3). Some Anglo-Catholics have developed the view that after the consecration 'an extension of the incarnation' takes place in the elements which seems to be a renewal of the mediaeval theory of *impanation* (that is, that Christ unites Himself to the elements, as He did to man at the Incarnation).

5. THE METHODIST DOCTRINE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Many of Charles Wesley's hymns contain high sacramental doctrine. So far as the official standard

documents of Methodism are concerned, Wesley repudiates the doctrine of transubstantiation, and he says, 'Is not the eating of that bread and the drinking of that cup the outward visible means whereby God conveys unto our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken and the blood of Christ once shed for us?' He thinks that Christ's discourse in John vi. 'concerning His Flesh and Blood, refers directly to His passion and but remotely, if at all, to the Lord's Supper.'

Methodist thought has in the main followed the line of Calvin's teaching as to the Supper. The following would be generally accepted:

1. The Supper is a memorial of our Lord's dying on our behalf.

2. It is a *sacramentum*, the renewal of the Christian soldier's oath of allegiance to his Master and Lord.

3. It is the feast of the Holy Communion. Christ is really present in Spirit, and is apprehended by faith. Dr. G. G. Findlay used to say that the Lord's Supper is the trysting-place of the Lover and the beloved.

The life of union with Christ is represented dramatically or symbolically by the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, and as we apprehend our Lord, who is really present, so does our union with Him deepen.

4. The Supper has a social significance. All social and other distinctions fall away among those who are guests at the Lord's Table, and those who are Christ's enter into fellowship with one another, as well as with their Lord. In the Holy Supper we have a foretaste of a redeemed society.

5. It is a pledge that our Lord will come again to consummate His Kingdom.

O blessed hope! with this elate,
Let not our hearts be desolate,
But, strong in faith, in patience wait
Until He come.

NOTE ON GRACE

The difference between the 'Catholic' and Evangelical conceptions of the gospel comes to a head in the interpretation of *Grace*. Both are agreed that grace is the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart. But 'Catholics' are apt to speak of grace as though it were an impersonal force (somewhat like the electric fluid), which is conveyed to men along certain recognized channels. They make much of the expression 'infused grace.' The Evangelical does not object to the expression, so long as it is understood that grace is infused *from within*, through fellowship with the Spirit. While Evangelicals hold that the Holy Spirit may and does work directly in the hearts of believers, 'Catholics' contend that the covenanted grace of God is mediated through the sacramental ordinances of the Church. All else is outside the covenant. It has been said, with a large measure of truth, that 'Catholics' seem to attach more importance to the 'channels of grace' than to grace itself. There is a sense in which it is true that the grace of God is (in the first instance) mediated through the Church. Luther wrote, 'Whoever would find Christ must first find the Church. How should one know where Christ and His faith are so long as one does not know where His believers are? He who would know something about Christ must not trust himself or build bridges into heaven by his own reason, but must go to the Church, visit and make inquiry of it. . . . Outside of the Christian Church is no truth, no Christ, and no salvation.' But Luther did not mean by this what 'Catholics' mean. He meant that the Church is necessary to salvation, because it teaches the gospel, not because it conveys grace.

It is a favourite saying of 'Catholics' that the Christian sacraments illustrate the general truth that all life is sacramental—that is, a medium for the realization of unseen realities. With this we agree, but it is difficult to see how so comprehensive a view of divine grace can be held side by side with teaching which seems to regard sacraments ordered in a particular way as the exclusive channels of what is called 'covenanted grace'—that is, the grace which is definitely promised in the gospel to the followers of Christ.

According to the Evangelical view, the only 'channel of grace' is fellowship with the Spirit. Sacraments and other ordinances may and do aid the realization of the fellowship, but they cannot 'convey' grace—that is to say, they cannot by their mere observance or performance produce the inward working of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

THE subject of 'eschatology'¹ is one for a volume rather than for a chapter. Nothing is possible here beyond a mere outline of biblical teaching. Inevitably, some statements will have to be made without an adequate explanation, and there will be the appearance of dogmatism.

In the Old Testament, up to the time of Jeremiah, moral responsibility is, in the main, attached to the family and the nation rather than to the individual. So long as the nation and the family had this prominence, the consequences of righteousness and sin were thought of in terms of the present life only, in the prosperity or disaster which overtook the family or nation concerned. All men, without distinction, were thought of as passing to an under-world called Sheol.²

¹ By 'eschatology' is meant doctrines which relate to the destiny of men after death or 'at the end of the world.'

² (1) The oldest view occurs in, e.g., Job. xxx. 23, Num. xvi. 30. Sheol is the place appointed for all living, is beneath the earth, and is the land of destruction, forgetfulness, and silence. The individual does exist, but without joy or contact with God or man. Good and bad fare alike (cf. Job x. 21; Ps. lxxxviii. 10-12, lxxxix. 48; Isa. xxxviii. 18 f.)

(2) In the second century, the doctrines of future retribution and resurrection altered the conception to that of an intermediate state.

(3) Owing to the resurrection being limited to the righteous, *Sheol* came to mean Hell, or Gehenna, as the preliminary or permanent abode of wicked souls. *Paradise* became the intermediate abode of the righteous (Luke xxiii. 43).

It is a place of subsistence rather than of existence (Isa. xiv. 9-12), and there was no redemption from it. At length the hope of individual immortality found utterance in Job (xiv. 14 f., xix. 25-7), and more confident expression in Psalms xlix. and lxxiii.¹ In these two Psalms Sheol is the eternal abode of the wicked only. The hope of a blessed life for the individual beyond the grave was developed out of the new sense of the value of the individual soul in the sight of God engendered by the individualism of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The hope of immortality thus arose in Israel as the result of the experience of individual *fellowship with God*. 'I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory' (Ps. lxxiii. 23 f.).

But, side by side with this, a national hope was being developed, that of the Messianic Kingdom. The great prophets looked forward to a time when the glories of the Kingdom of David would be renewed on earth. These prophets expected the Gentiles to have some share in the Messianic Kingdom, but Old Testament thought after the Exile tended to exclude the Gentiles. Ultimately the conception was reached that Israel's righteous dead would rise to share in this Kingdom on earth (Isa. xxiv.-xxvii.).² Daniel (xii. 2) goes further and looks for the resurrection of both good and evil; but as he speaks of 'many' it would appear that he did not hope for a universal resurrection.

It is not, however, in the Old Testament, but in the apocalyptic literature (from about 200 B.C.) that we find the most important developments of both the

¹ See also Wisdom iii. 2 ff., vi. 18 f., viii. 17.

² A post-exilic fragment.

individual and the national hope.¹ New Testament teaching on the 'Last Things' is set in an apocalyptic framework. We must, therefore, outline briefly Apocalyptic teaching on this subject. The Apocalyp-
tists conceived of the Messianic era as a golden age, physically as well as morally and spiritually. The idea of the Messianic Kingdom was gradually purged of materialistic associations. If its centre was to be Jerusalem, it was to be a New Jerusalem. If it was to be everlasting on the earth, it was to be a renovated earth. In the first century B.C. the hope of an *eternal* Kingdom of God *on the present earth* was abandoned. Henceforth the Messianic age is but a preparation for the era which is to dawn at the consummation of all things. The era up to the end of the Messianic age is called *the Present Age*; that which dawns after the consummation of all things is called the *Age to Come*. Usually the Messianic age is preceded by a great Assize, or by a chastisement of the Gentiles, but occasionally it is conceived of as coming gradually. Sometimes the judgement which precedes the dawn of the Messianic era is the Final Judgement. In other cases the Final Judgement does not come till the end of the Messianic age, the preceding judgement only determining who shall share the Messianic joys and glories. There is no uniformity of teaching as to *resurrection* and *immortality*. Most writers anticipate a resurrection at the beginning of the Messianic age. Some teach the resurrection of all

¹ Apocalyptic has its roots in the Old Testament (e.g. Isa. xxxiv., xxxv.; Zech. ix., xiv.; and Daniel). 'Apocalyptic sketched in outline the history of the world and of mankind, the origin of evil, its course and evitable overthrow, the ultimate triumph of righteousness and the final consummation of all things. It was thus a Semitic philosophy of religion' Charles: *Between the Old and the New Testaments*, p. 24).

men, some of all Israel, some of righteous Israel, and some are indefinite. In very few cases are the blessings of the Messianic age regarded as being reserved for Israel alone. But even when the wider outlook is taken, the main interest is in the vindication of Israel.

In this period and in this literature *Sheol*¹ and *Gehenna* became in part equivalent terms. The term *Gehenna* is derived from the Valley of Hinnom (Jos. xviii. 16; Neh. xi. 30). This valley became notorious because of its association with idolatrous rites, e.g. the passing of children through the fires of Moloch (Jer. vii. 31, xxxii. 35; 2 Kings xxiii. 10; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3, xxxiii. 6). It is thought by some scholars that perpetual fires were kept burning in this valley for consuming dead bodies of criminals and carcasses of animals and the refuse of the city. In any case it was a place of fire, whether the fires of Moloch or those for consuming refuse, &c. *Gehenna* came to signify *a place of corporal and spiritual punishment for all the wicked in the presence of the righteous*. 'And then shall the pit of torment appear. . . . The furnace of *Gehenna* shall be made manifest' (2 Esdras vii. 36).

The New Testament writers use the apocalyptic framework, but it may be doubted whether to them it is anything more than framework. They give to the old ideas a deeper meaning and content, and the difficulty which besets the expositor is to discover what exactly that meaning is. Our Lord, for instance uses the symbolism of the Messianic Kingdom, which

¹ *Sheol* has now become a place where moral distinctions exist, but there is no passing from one moral grade to another (1 Enoch xxii. 9-13). It is the intermediate State of the Righteous and the eternal abode of the wicked.

is to be inaugurated by the coming of the Son of Man¹ on the clouds of heaven. He spoke of the *Present Age* and of the *Age to Come* (Matt. xiii. 39, 49, xxiv. 3, xxviii. 20; Mark x. 30; Luke xviii. 30). He used the Gehenna symbol. But we cannot always be quite certain how this imagery is to be interpreted. For instance, when He speaks of the Kingdom, we cannot always be sure whether He is speaking of the temporary Messianic Kingdom or of the eternal Kingdom in the heavens, nor can we be sure of the way in which He connected the two.

The New Testament does not develop any argument in support of the belief in what is called the natural *immortality of the soul*. It is always assumed that the soul survives death. Our Lord's own position is made quite clear in Luke xx. 37 ff. 'But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed . . . when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him.'

But our Lord and the New Testament writers are not so much concerned with the mere fact of survival, which in itself is not of great importance, as with the quality of the life to be lived after death. They do not seem to attach any value to life beyond the grave unless it is lived in the presence of God and in fellowship with Him. It is described as life 'in the Kingdom of the Father' (Matt. xiii. 43), or 'with Christ' (Phil. i. 23). The expression 'eternal life,' which occurs most frequently in the *Gospel* and *Epistles of John* does not signify simply everlasting life. It has

¹ The title *Son of Man* which Jesus applied to Himself is derived from Daniel and 1 Enoch.

reference to the quality of the life. It is a life which derives its quality from the relation in which the soul stands to God. 'This is life eternal, that they should know¹ Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ' (John xvii. 3). But, while it may be true that the soul is naturally immortal, it is not all who inherit eternal life. There are moral conditions (Rom. ii. 6; 2 Cor. v. 10), the fulfilment of which depends on the soul's relation to Jesus Christ (Matt. xxv. 45 f.; 1 John v. 12).

I. JUDGEMENT

Judgement is a reality. The witness of the New Testament is plain. Christian theology cannot be evacuated of this element, without the perversion of the teaching of our Lord and of the Apostles. While the spectacular dress given in some passages to the Final Judgement may be symbolic, there is still a Final Judgement. We cannot fail to note in the teaching of our Lord 'the continual prophecy of a decisive separation of the heirs of the Kingdom from the rest of humanity. The King is constantly depicted as closing the gates of the City against those who are without—being deaf to all appeals, all entreaties, all knocking at the door (Matt. xxv. 1-12). This note of exclusion is so dominant as to suggest a most solemn thought in the mind of Jesus. It belongs to a minor strain which is heard in the voice of our Lord—a sadness of foreboding, a stern perception of ominous possibilities. There is a broad and easy way that leads to destruction (Matt. vii. 13 f.); it profits a man

¹ For John, knowledge implies fellowship.

nothing if he gain the whole world and lose his own life (Matt. xvi. 26); it had been well for Judas if he had never been born; apostate disciples are as salt that has lost its virtue, and is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men (Matt. v. 13); there is an obscurity of the soul wherein the very light is as darkness (Matt. vi. 23) . . . there are offenders for whom it were better that a millstone were hanged about the neck and they were drowned in the depths of the seas (Matt. xviii. 6). These are all sayings that are weighted with a burden of prophetic warning. They compel us to recognize with an awe of spirit, which is the deeper the more humbly we acknowledge the authority of Jesus, that He believed in an immeasurable danger which threatened the souls of men; a horror of a great darkness from which they had to be delivered.¹ In the Synoptic Gospels the Judgement is represented as taking place 'at the end of the age' (Matt. xiii. 39). In the Fourth Gospel, however, emphasis is placed on the Judgement as *present*. 'He that believeth on Him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil' (John iii. 18 f.). It does not follow from this that the Johannine teaching is incompatible with that of the Synoptics. The Final Judgement does but record the judgement which men pass on themselves here and now by their attitude to Christ, as revealed in their character and conduct.

¹ J. H. Leckie: *The World to Come and Final Destiny*, p. 152 f.

2. THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

The New Testament in its teaching as to the Future is mainly concerned with the destiny of the Christian man. What then are the elements in the Christian hope?

I. ETERNAL LIFE IN GOD THROUGH CHRIST

The Christian believes that life here is a school to fit us for a larger and nobler life hereafter. He has the confident assurance that the moral travail of earth is not for naught, that the good won shall not be buried in the tomb, but that earth's aspirations shall find fulfilment in another sphere of life. Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother and Forerunner, has conquered death, and He is 'the firstfruits' (1 Cor. xv. 20). The basal ground of the Christian's confident assurance is his fellowship with God in Jesus Christ. 'Because I live, ye shall live also' (John xiv. 19). Death can neither injure nor destroy the life that is hid with Christ in God (Col. iii. 3). For this reason death is transfigured for the Christian. Death is robbed of its sting and the grave of its victory. It ceases to have any terrors; it is but the door into the larger life of undimmed fellowship with God—a life of growth and of service. Paul sums up his conception of the Future by saying that he has 'the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better' (Phil. i. 23).

There has been a good deal of controversy among theologians as to whether the souls of the righteous pass into an *Intermediate State* between death and

the Final Judgement, or directly into the blessedness of the presence of God. There are suggestions of an Intermediate State in our Lord's reference to Paradise (Luke xxiii. 43) and in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19 ff.), though the references are only incidental. Lazarus is said to be in 'Abraham's bosom,' and Dives in Hades (not Gehenna). Lazarus is in a place apart from Dives, but not out of his sight. On the other hand, there are passages in the epistles (Phil. i. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 17, is sometimes detached from its context and interpreted in this sense) which suggest that the souls of the righteous pass at death into the immediate presence of God. We are here almost entirely in the region of speculation, and we can only seek reverently to draw out the corollaries of the things which have been revealed. It is easy to conceive of those who are ripe in Christian character and attainments, as passing immediately into the presence of God. But the description does not apply to all Christians, or even to the majority of them, and, unless it be supposed that the physical process of death produces an inevitable moral change (and in that case the change could not strictly be described as *moral*), not all Christians can be held to be ready for the Blessed Life. When we add the further considerations of those who die in infancy, and of those who have had no spiritual opportunity, it seems as though the implicates of Christian teaching compel us to assume, for some, at any rate, an Intermediate State between death and judgement.¹

¹ According to Roman Catholic doctrine, *Purgatory* is a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in a state of grace, are not entirely free from venial faults, and have not been fully punished for their mortal sins. They suffer punishment, but they can be

It should be added, here, that the New Testament does not regard the destiny of the soul merely from the standpoint of the individual. Each soul shapes its own destiny. It is not, however, a solitary destiny that is realized, but life in a community or kingdom. The righteous shall shine forth 'in the Kingdom of their Father' (Matt. xiii. 43); they are to be 'partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light' (Col. i. 12).

2. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Christian teaching has always insisted on maintaining the close association of the idea of resurrection with that of immortality. In the Gospels the two ideas are perhaps hardly distinguishable, though it should be noted that our Lord teaches that our physical nature does not pass unaltered into the Hereafter (Matt. xxii. 30). In the Fourth Gospel the resurrection is represented as a present process which takes place when men come under the power of Christ, who mediates eternal life to them, as well as a future event. When Martha says that she knows that Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection at the last day, Jesus replies: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die' (xi. 24 ff.). Again, He said, 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live' (v. 25). The resurrection life and eternal life are one and

aided by the vows, prayers, satisfactions, and almsgivings of the living, by indulgences, and especially by the sacrifice of the Mass. When purified they pass into Heaven (Matt. xii. 32; Phil. ii. 10; 1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Cor. iii. 11-15; 2 Macc. xii. 42-6).

the same thing and are a present possession. The references in this Gospel to 'the last day' (vi. 40) seem to suggest that while those who 'hear the voice of the Son of God' enter into the glorified life here and now, they realize it more completely at the final consummation of all things.

Paul approaches the question in the light of our Lord's resurrection and of His glorified body. It is no disembodied spirit that enters on the immortal life; the human personality survives in its integrity. There is a *resurrection of the body*, but not this body of flesh, for 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God' (1 Cor. xv. 50). God prepares for those who are Christ's a body suitable to the conditions of the Future Life. 'For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked' (2 Cor. v. 1 ff.). 'If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body'¹ (1 Cor. xv. 44). As in the case of Christ, the body that is buried is 'sown a natural body' and 'raised a spiritual body.' It may be that there is a close connexion between our natural and spiritual bodies (that the latter is the counterpart of the former) and that we are fashioning our spiritual bodies now according to the measure of the dominance of the Spirit of God in us. In that case the resurrection of the body takes place at the

¹The words 'natural' and 'spiritual' are inadequate translations of the terms used. A friend suggests the following paraphrase of the verse: 'There is a body corresponding to human nature on its lower side, and a body corresponding to it on its higher (or nobler) side.'

moment of death, when the spiritual body is liberated from 'the earthly house of this tabernacle.'¹ There is also a passage in the record of our Lord's teaching which points in this direction. 'But as touching the dead, that they are raised; have ye not read . . . I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living' (Mark xii. 26). The implication is that the patriarchs have already risen.

The question arises, Who participates in the resurrection? Is there a general resurrection of good and evil alike? So far as we can judge from the record in the Gospels, our Lord did not speak of the resurrection of any save those whose destiny it is to become 'as angels in heaven' (Matt. xxii. 29-33), or, as Luke records, who 'are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead' (xx. 35, cf. xiv. 14, where the reference is to the 'resurrection of the just'). It would seem then that according to the Synoptists, our Lord speaks of the resurrection of the righteous only.

The teaching of the Fourth Gospel appears to be the same. As we have seen, the resurrection life and eternal life are regarded as identical—the inheritance of those who are in a right relation with Christ, who is 'the resurrection and the life.'²

¹ The original form of the Apostle's Creed read: 'I believe in the resurrection of the flesh' (*resurrectio carnis*). That was the reading of the older English translation of the Creed. The word 'body' was substituted for 'flesh' in the sixteenth century, but 'flesh' is retained in the Anglican Order for baptism. The Nicene Creed reads 'resurrection of the dead.'

² There is a passage in the Fourth Gospel which is completely out of harmony with this: 'The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgement' (v. 28 f.). But the passage is so opposed to the trend of the Johannine teaching that some scholars reject it as an interpolation. But see Rev. xx. 13.

St. Paul too seems to confine resurrection to believers. Those who are raised are raised 'in incorruption,' 'in glory,' and 'in power' (1 Cor. xv. 42 f.). He hopes 'to attain to the resurrection from the dead' through his experience of Christ and 'the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings' (Phil. iii. 10 f.).

It does not follow from this that Paul thought that the unrighteous cease to exist at death.¹ All that can be safely deduced from his language is that resurrection, which he always regards as resurrection unto life, is an experience which is limited to those who believe in Christ. It may be that 'a region not lit with the light of Christ's presence was not one Paul cared to explore.'² But this interpretation is not universally accepted. Some scholars hold that the universal Judgement involves universal Resurrection. Between these two views it is not easy to make a dogmatic choice.

The Christian Hope relates not merely to destiny of the individual, but to the triumph of the Kingdom of God. For this reason Christian faith has always cherished the hope of

3. THE RETURN OF CHRIST

The hope of the return of Christ resounds throughout the New Testament (Matt. xvi. 27, xxv. 31; Mark viii. 38; Luke xii. 40; 1 Thess. iv. 13-v. 10; Phil. iii. 20 f.; Rev. i. 7). Jesus Christ will come again to consummate

¹ In Acts xxix. 15, Paul is reported to affirm that there will be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust, but in the Epistles he seems to leave the resurrection of the wicked an open question, though he asserts that they will survive death and come up for judgement (Rom. xiv. 10).

² R. G. MacIntyre: *The Other Side of Death*, p. 190.

His Kingdom. The New Testament term for this Return is *Parousia* (lit., presence). The thought of the Parousia as a definite historical event ending the Present Age and inaugurating the Age to Come is undoubtedly a prominent element in the teaching of our Lord as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. The Son of Man is to judge the world, vindicate righteousness, and consummate His Kingdom in a transcendent sphere. How the Parousia is to be visualized, it is impossible to say. When Jesus speaks of coming in power and glory on the clouds of heaven, He is using conventional imagery which has a concrete meaning behind it, but which cannot be translated literally. All that we can say is that the Present Age will be ended by some mighty manifestation of the personal presence and power of Jesus Christ. But there are some indications that Jesus spoke of His coming as a process as well as an event (Matt. x. 23; cf. Mark ix. 1, where the reference is probably to the destruction of Jerusalem or to the triumphal spread of the Gospel, and John xiv. 18, where the Parousia is the presence of Christ through spiritual communion). The great movements which are inspired by the living Spirit of Jesus are comings of the Son of Man. Jesus urged men to be watchful, not merely that they may be ready if the End should come in their day, but that they may welcome every fresh manifestation of His presence and power in the movements of history (Luke xviii. 8). They must realize that the Kingdom comes from above, and not by mere effort and organization (Luke xii. 32).

Perplexity often arises from the fact that our

Lord is sometimes recorded as seeming to predict His early return (Mark ix. 1, xiv. 62; Matt. x. 23), while on other occasions He speaks as though the event lies in the distant future (Mark xiii. 10), and again definitely disclaims all knowledge of the day of His coming (Mark xiii. 32). The passages which speak of His immediate return cannot be explained away. They are the utterances of the faith which foreshortened the future. They witness to our Lord's belief that the mighty power of God is a greater factor in the coming of the Kingdom than the slow processes of education and evolution. Jesus, like every prophet, used language which appeared to foreshorten the time. In certain moods it is impossible for any one to speak of the glory of the consummated Kingdom of God without leaving on the mind of his hearers the impression that it is actually near at hand, knocking at the door. It must be remembered that our Lord taught that the Kingdom in its inward and spiritual sense might there and then be received, and His hearers would not at first easily distinguish between this idea and that of the consummated Kingdom. Further, He taught that the coming of the glorious end might be hastened by the response of faith, and this, too, would have the effect of foreshortening the time.¹ But the evidence, when fairly weighed, does not justify the assumption that He confidently expected to return speedily or that He intended to teach His disciples to cherish this expectation.

The idea of the Parousia, as a definite, catastrophic, historical event at the end of the Age, is little more

¹ The last few sentences are derived from the author's *The Kingdom Heaven*, p. 100 f.

than suggested in the Fourth Gospel. When the Parousia is mentioned, the references usually seem to be to manifestations of the presence and power of Christ in the processes of history. The Parousia in the Fourth Gospel is more spiritual than eschatological.

Paul's thought on the Parousia underwent development. In his earlier epistles he seems to have looked for the early return of his Lord (1 Thess. iv. 13-v. 10; 2 Thess. i. 7-10, ii. 1-12). But in the Epistles of the Imprisonment, he does not mention the Parousia (except in Phil. iii. 20, iv. 5, but cf. i. 23), but envisages a cosmic process which is to lead up to the consummation of the Kingdom of God and of Christ (Col. i. 12-20; Eph. i. 10). 'While the thought of the Parousia was one of Paul's ruling ideas, he did not view the hope of its nearness out of perspective. His emphasis was on the certainty of the consummation of the Kingdom of Christ rather than on the time of the consummation. He was constrained to work for it, and not merely to wait for it. He was thus saved from the obsession of a single idea. He hoped that Christ would appear in his lifetime, but his vision comprehended the universe, and he discerned the need of far-reaching moral and spiritual processes to be worked out in history before all things could be summed up in Christ. He therefore exhorted the Thessalonians to go quietly on with their work, even while he told them that the Lord was at hand (1 Thess. iv. 11 f.). He himself organized his Churches as though he contemplated a long future before the coming of the Day of Christ. Doubtless he was inconsistent, but great spiritual geniuses, who possess a many-sided vision of the truth, are not afraid of inconsistency. Paul

knew that faith can hasten historical processes, and his prophetic vision on occasion foreshortened the time.’¹

The hope of the Return of Christ has always been a vital element in Christian faith. It creates the assurance that the Son of Man commands all history, and that He is guiding the world to a glorious consummation in which good is destined to triumph over evil through the mighty power and love of God.

3. THEORIES OF DESTINY

Christian thought has naturally been much exercised with the question of the destiny of men after death. The New Testament makes it abundantly clear that those who accept Christ’s proffered salvation will enter into a glorious future of eternal fellowship with God, of growth and of service (Matt. xxv. 46; John x. 21, xiv. 2f.; Phil. i. 23; Rev. xxii. 1-5). But what of the lot of those who have rejected Christ and His salvation? Christian thought has followed three main lines, each of which claims some warrant in Scripture.

1. UNIVERSALISM

It is held that *finally* (it may be after many ages) evil will be utterly destroyed and that all souls will be reconciled to God. This view has had advocates in the Church at least from the time of Origen, though it has never been counted ‘orthodox.’ It is defended on the general ground that God’s love will not be wholly victorious and Christ’s triumph will not be

complete if finally there remain any 'lost' souls. Scriptural support is sought in such passages as the following: 'Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come' (Matt. xii. 32). It is assumed that the implication is that though one particular sin will not be forgiven, all other sins will be forgiven. This, unsatisfactory though it is, is practically the only passage adduced from the Synoptic Gospels in support of the universalist view, and over against it must be set passages which point the other way. Other passages quoted in favour of the view are: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself' (John xii. 32); 'That God may be all in all' (1 Cor. xv. 28); 'As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (1 Cor. xv. 22). 'Through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life' (Rom. v. 18); 'God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all' (Rom. xi. 32); 'That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow' (Phil. ii. 10). There is no need to enter into the exegesis of these passages here. It must suffice to say that the interpretation put upon them by universalists is, to say the least, very doubtful.

In fairness it should be stated that this view is not necessarily divorced from a belief in the reality of future punishment. It is possible to hold that the utmost consequences of sin must be paid, and yet to believe that *finally* all men will be reconciled to God. Origen, for example, affirmed that sin leaves indelible marks on the soul, and that consequently sin involves the soul in an eternal sense of loss.

The arguments which tell most strongly in favour of universalism are (1) The contention that Christ's victory is incomplete so long as there is in the universe any evil that is unredeemed. (2) The fact that the race is a unity would seem to imply that the salvation of each is bound up with the salvation of all. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, writing of the men of faith, says, 'apart from us they should not be made perfect' (xi. 40). The same principle would seem to apply to all men in relation to their fellows. This argument has special force when we consider those who are bound to one another by ties of love. It would seem to us that their bliss must be imperfect if those whom they love are among the 'lost.' But on the other side it may be urged:

1. It is possible that a man may have so yielded to sin as to have become incapable of repentance and of responding to the divine love. Our Lord taught that the sin against the Holy Spirit—the deliberate and persistent choice of evil instead of good—cannot be forgiven. The man who commits this sin cannot be forgiven, because he is incapable of receiving forgiveness. He has said, 'Evil, be thou my good,' and it may be that character may become so fixed, that repentance is unattainable even in the next world.

2. To assert that all men must ultimately be saved seems to some to involve a serious interference with human freedom. It is to imply that ultimately all men will be compelled to yield to the power of God. But it may be questioned whether this argument has very much force. To cherish the confident hope that ultimately all men will yield to the persuasive

ministries of grace and to the constraint of divine love is not to invoke compulsion. At the same time there is always the danger of surrender to an optimistic fatalism.

3. One of the commonest objections to universalism is that it cannot be preached without weakening the moral sense. It is urged that if men are told that they will all be ultimately saved, they will be apt to regard sin lightly. This is a very real danger, though it would be mitigated if, side by side with the hope of universal restoration, the preacher were to proclaim the reality of the future punishment of sin.

4. The strongest objection against universalism, the one which explains its failure to command the assent of the Church, is that it finds such dubious support in Scripture. The passages quoted, even if they existed alone, are by no means conclusive. But, read in connexion with other passages, they afford no ground for dogmatism, and at the most do but give some ground for a reverent agnosticism.

2. CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY

According to this theory man is not naturally immortal. The gift of immortality belongs to those who live in fellowship with Christ. Those who are not Christ's may survive the dissolution of the body, but, as their life is not rooted and grounded in God, it has no guarantee of permanence. If they continue in impenitence and reject the divine grace, they are doomed to final annihilation. This view found some support in the Christian Fathers, but was not influential

in the shaping of Christian thought. It did not attain prominence until after the Reformation, when it was held by the early Unitarians, and was set forth in the *Racovian Catechism* (1605), the earliest Unitarian Confession. But it is significant that this view has not held its ground among the Unitarian Churches. Among its defenders in the nineteenth century were Horace Bushnell, R. W. Dale, and Edward White.¹

There is little in the Synoptic Gospels which can be claimed in support of this view, save that the Conditionalists are rather apt to regard the terms *life* and *death* as synonymous with *existence* and *non-existence*, and quote such a passage as Matt. vii. 13 f. in support of their theory. But it is difficult to believe that the immortality of the soul is not a presupposition of the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. A strong case can, at first sight, be made out for Johannine support of the doctrine of conditional immortality, for both the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles of John teach that the life which is life indeed is mediated through the Son (John i. 4, vi. 33-5, x. 10, xvii. 3; 1 John v. 12). But the distinction there drawn is not between immortality and annihilation, but between eternal life and mere survival. The theory is held to find support in other New Testament writings because of the frequent use of the words 'destruction' and 'perdition' to describe the lot of the wicked (Rom. iii. 16, ix. 22; 1 Thess. v. 3; 2 Thess. i. 9; 2 Pet. iii. 7; Phil. i. 28, iii. 19). But it is a very strained exegesis which gives to these words the meaning of total annihilation, especially

¹ For a more recent exposition of this view see J. Y. Simpson: *Man and the Attainment of Immortality*.

when they are viewed in the light of their whole context.

This theory renders a service in so far as it emphasizes the moral quality of the life to come—that Eternal Life is not merely existence without end, but life in God. But the objections to the theory outweigh the elements of truth which it expresses.

1. *It takes away the belief in the natural immortality of the soul.* This is a big price to pay for the logicity and simplicity which the theory offers us. Whether the soul is capable of being destroyed or of destroying itself is a metaphysical question on which we need not enter here. We need only say that, if the soul can survive the shock of separation from the body in the hour of physical death, it is hard to conceive that it is liable to another kind of annihilation at a later stage. To conceive of the soul as not naturally immortal is to lower its greatness and its dignity. Moreover, there is much to be said for the objection that this theory denies the unity of the human race. If immortality is conditional and is something to be won, it is not of the essence of human nature. Conditionalism splits up the human race into two species—those who have immortality and those who have not.

2. The aim of this theory is to do away with an ultimate Dualism, and to foreshadow a universe in which God's love will be triumphant. But the theory does not achieve what it sets out to do. The victory of God's love does not seem to be complete, if some of His children have chosen annihilation rather than reconciliation.

3. ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

According to this theory the destiny of every man is fixed at death.¹ The good enter into everlasting life, and the wicked are doomed to everlasting punishment. The punishment is partly the outworking of sin in character, and in some cases the mental torture of remorse. The most terrible element in it is entire and everlasting separation from God. Some of the older theologians used to teach that there is an element of physical torment in the punishment, but that is a view which finds very little assent to-day. The theory of 'eternal punishment' may be called the 'orthodox' theory of the Church. Though not unchallenged, as we have seen, it was the dominant view among the Fathers of the Church. But it is significant that neither of the two great creeds expresses any judgement on this matter. The so-called Athanasian Creed teaches that the wicked suffer everlasting perdition.

The decrees of the Council of Trent speak of 'eternal punishment,' the Longer Catechism of the Greek Church (1839) of 'everlasting fire' and 'everlasting torment,' and in the main the confessions of the Protestant Churches take up the same position. It must be admitted that there are many passages in the New Testament which seem to point clearly in this direction. Passages have already been quoted earlier in this chapter showing how our Lord spoke of a decisive separation of the heirs of the Kingdom from the rest of humanity. Whatever theory be ultimately adopted, full weight must be given to these

¹ Although they have not usually been held together, the theory of eternal punishment is compatible with the belief in future probation, eternal punishment being regarded as the lot of the *finally* impenitent.

passages. Then there are those passages in which He uses the Gehenna imagery. 'It is good for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' (Mark ix. 47 f.). The language is, of course, figurative. It clearly indicates punishment that is terrible, but there is no assertion that the punishment is unending. Because it is said that 'the fire is not quenched,' it does not follow that a particular individual will continue in the fire for ever. Moreover, degrees of guilt and punishment are recognized. There are to be 'many stripes' and 'few stripes' (Luke xii. 47 f.).

But the most important passage is Matt. xxv. 31-46.¹ It is said that the wicked 'shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.' At first sight this seems conclusive, but the meaning does not lie on the surface. Our Lord is describing the coming of the Son of Man to inaugurate His Kingdom. He is describing the conditions on which men will be admitted into or excluded from the joys of the Kingdom. The word² which is translated 'eternal' does not necessarily mean everlasting, though that appears to be its usage outside the New Testament. It means enduring for the Age (the Present Age or the Messianic Age, or the Age to come).

¹ Judgement is according to works, as a reference to this passage shows. Paul's teaching is equally clear. While he holds that men are justified by faith, he has no doubt that they are judged according to their works (Rom. 11. 6) which are, in the case of the righteous the fruit of faith (Gal. v. 5 f.).

² The word *aionios* (eternal) is generally used outside the N.T. in the sense of everlasting. Yet in the Septuagint, it is applied to the Aaronic priesthood (Num. xxv. 13), the gates of Zion (Ps. xxiv. 9) and the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi. 34). In 1 Enoch x. 10 there is a reference to *aionios* life, which the following sentence defines as lasting 500 years. In these instances *aionios* evidently means a long period of time.

It is impossible to tell whether in this passage our Lord is describing the coming of the Son of Man to inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom or the Age to Come. If the former, it does not follow that those who are excluded from the Messianic Kingdom are also shut out of the joys of the Age to Come. It may be that the punishment spoken of is remedial. The word which is used for punishment sometimes occurs in this sense in the New Testament period. While it cannot be positively affirmed that the word is used with this remedial meaning in this passage, it must be allowed that this meaning cannot be dogmatically ruled out.

An examination of the utterances of our Lord (Matt. xxv. 31-46, v. 29 f., xviii. 8 f.; Mark ix. 43 ff.; Luke xvi. 19 ff.) usually quoted in support of the doctrine of Eternal Punishment, therefore, shakes our confidence as to the truth of the interpretation which has been placed upon them, and justifies us in taking an agnostic position, not as to the reality of future retribution, but as to the extent of its duration. A similar difficulty attaches to the interpretation of the other New Testament writings (2 Thess. i. 9; Phil. iii. 19; 2 Pet. iii. 7; Jude 6 f.; Rev. xxi. 8). They have the same apocalyptic background, and we cannot be certain that the language used is intended to indicate finality, though it must be admitted that as in the case of the Gospels, it may be so.

4. CONCLUSION

Such light as is available on this mysterious subject is to be found not so much in the interpretation of particular passages, as in the whole teaching of the

gospel concerning God. God is portrayed as 'our Father' whose holy love to us is unbounded and unfailing, and who 'is not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (2 Pet. iii. 9). Such being the case, it is unthinkable that any limit can be placed to the ministries of the grace of God, whether here or hereafter. It may be said with confidence that God's love never ceases 'to seek and to save,' and that God is ready to redeem a man even from the deepest Hell, *if he is capable of responding to the divine love*. The qualification is important. There are in our human nature dread possibilities of hardening. Our Lord taught that persistent rejection of the good may so harden the soul as to incapacitate it for receiving forgiveness. If any are ultimately lost it will not be through any failure of the Love of God, but through their own wilful rejection of love and mercy.¹ Further than this we need not go. The New Testament makes it quite clear that sin is followed by terrible retribution in the future life. If we are left in doubt as to the extent of the duration of the punishment, we may be content that the issue is in the hands of One whose righteousness and love are inseparable. Perhaps one of the most illuminating words on this theme in the New Testament is the statement that Judas has gone 'to his own place' (Acts. i. 25). Every man goes 'to his own place.' It is our character and our relationship to God that determine our place in the eternal order.

¹ Some of the advocates of the doctrine of Eternal Punishment believe that the number of the saved will be infinitely greater than that of the 'lost.' 'We have reason to believe that the lost will bear to the saved no greater proportion than the inmates of a prison do to the mass of the community' (Dr. Hodge, quoted by J. S. Banks in *A Manual of Theology* p. 271).

NOTE A

MILLENARIANISM

Millenarianism, or Chiliasm¹ is the belief that either before or after the second advent of Jesus Christ there will be a period of a thousand years (the millennium) during which righteousness will reign triumphant on earth. This belief is based on Rev. xx. 1-6; 1 Cor. xv. 23 f.; 1 Thess. iv. 14-17; Luke xiv. 14, xx. 35; Matt. xix. 28. But whether Millenarians draw the right conclusions from these passages is another matter. The belief depends on the literal interpretation of a highly symbolic passage (Rev. xx. 1-6), which has no real support elsewhere in the New Testament. *Post-Millenarians* look for the Second Advent of Christ at the close of a long period of prosperity and righteousness. *Pre-Millenarians*, who are far more numerous and aggressive, expect the Second Advent to inaugurate an era during which Christ will reign personally and visibly on earth. They are the heritors of the expectations of the Jewish apocalyptists that, with the coming of the Messiah, a golden age would dawn on earth. Pre-Millenarians share the apocalyptists' despair of the present order, and set their hopes of the triumph of righteousness on the Second Advent. It is fair, however, to state that this has not necessarily led to any relaxation of effort, but that many holding these views have been most devoted in the service of the Kingdom of God.

Probably Pre-Millenarianism was dominant in the Church till the time of Origen. It is found in Barnabas, Hermas, Papias, Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, and even in the Latin Fathers of the third and fourth centuries who had not come under the influence of Greek theology. Its influence was, however, undermined by the excesses of Montanism, and by the teaching of the Greek Fathers (especially Origen), and finally by Augustine, who, in the light of political conditions, taught that the Catholic Church was the Kingdom of Christ and that the Millennial Kingdom had commenced with the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Since then, Millenarianism in any of its forms has ceased to be part of the main stream of Christian teaching. 'At various periods in the history of the Middle Ages, we encounter sudden outbreaks of Millenarianism, sometimes as the tenet of a small sect, sometimes as a far-reaching movement. And, since it had been suppressed, not as in the East, by mystical speculation, its mightiest antagonist, but by the political Church of the hierarchy, we find that whenever Chiliasm appears in the Middle Ages, it makes common cause with all enemies of the secularized Church. It strengthened the hands of Church democracy; it forced an alliance with the pure souls who held up to the Church the ideal of Apostolic poverty; it united itself for a time

¹ From the Greek work for a thousand. In 2 Enoch and the Apocalypse of Baruch the Messianic era is to last, 1,000 years, but in 2 Esdras, 400 years. In each case the figure is evidently symbolic of a long period of time.

even with mysticism in a common opposition to the supremacy of the Church; nay, it lent the strength of its convictions to the support of states and princes in their efforts to break the political power of the Church. . . . There were pure evangelical forces at work in it; and many Anabaptists need not shun comparison with the Christians of the apostolic and post-apostolic ages.¹

The Reformers had no sympathy with Millenarianism, but none the less it has found its way into many Protestant Churches and sects. Pre-Millenarianism has had some distinguished advocates in this country, in America, and on the Continent, but it has not succeeded in establishing itself in the main body of Christian belief, and it is regarded by the general Christian consciousness as of the nature of an aberration.² It is a fundamental tenet of the Christadelphians and of the Plymouth Brethren. Millennial ideas lie at the foundation of that grotesque excrescence of American religion, Millennial Dawnism, or Russellism.

¹ A. Harnack: article 'Millennium' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

² John Wesley said of certain calculations which had been made as to the date of the commencement of the millennial reign of Christ, 'I have no opinion at all upon the head; I can determine nothing at all about it. These calculations are far above, out of my sight. I have only one thing to do—to save my own soul and those that hear me' (Letter to Christopher Hopper (1777), cccvi. in *Works*, Vol. xii.).

CHAPTER XII

GOD AND THE WORLD

WE have considered the main foundation truths of the Christian faith. We have now to inquire what view they give us of God's relation to the world. We start from the idea of God as Creator. This means that He is both the *ground* and the *cause* of the world. It implies that the world came into being and is sustained through the activity of Personal Will, animated by conscious purpose. God is said to create the world 'out of nothing,' the meaning of which might to-day be expressed in some such terms as the following: 'It may be that the ultimate explanation of the world is to be found in the native power of divine Spirit, simple, original, incapable of being analysed, capable only of being experienced. "The Father," said Jesus, "hath life in Himself"—and out of the fullness of His life He giveth life. The last answer to the last question we can ask may be found in the essential Fatherhood of God. Creative Fatherhood may be a real Ultima Thule beyond which no ship sails.'¹

Modern science regards creation, not as a finished act, but as a process which is still going on.² The

¹ W. Cosby Bell: *Sharing in Creation*, p. 87.

² This view is not inconsistent with Christian doctrine, so long as Nature is thought of as always wholly dependent on God (cf. Col. i. 17; Heb. i. 3, where it is said that the Son sustains the universe).

creation is moving to 'the one far-off divine event' under the control and guidance of Him who brought it into being. Our world, as we know it, is therefore an unfinished world. This raises the question, What is the purpose which God is seeking to achieve through the creative process which is still going on? The New Testament enables us to answer that the main purpose of God in creation is 'to bring many sons unto glory' (Heb. ii. 10). That is, God's ultimate purpose is the creation of a *moral* universe—a universe of free, self-conscious beings, who shall live in loving fellowship with Him, and shall do His will gladly and spontaneously.¹ His purpose is the development of *sons*, not mere *slaves*.

The son does his father's will because he loves his father; the slave acts according to laws imposed on him from without. It will be seen, therefore, that the creation of a moral universe involves a far greater enterprise than that of a purely mechanical universe. It involves the co-operation of man in the creative process. The creation is to reach its grand consummation, not through the activity of God alone, but through the co-operation of man and God.² If God is to bring 'many sons unto glory,' it can only be through the co-operation of those who are potentially sons. Man has been endowed with moral freedom. It is a priceless gift, but a very dangerous and costly one. It has all manner of possibilities within it. Men are free to choose wrongly and to act wrongly. The gift opened

¹ 'He creates the conditions under which freedom can be won by spiritual beings, and then in a measure leaves them to the winning of their freedom' (J. Y. Simpson: *Man and the Attainment of Immortality*, p. 270 f.).

² 'We may have the vision of life . . . as a great adventure of creative will, with which we are privileged to co-operate' (W. R. Matthews: *God and Evolution*, 52 f.).

the door to all the nameless evils that pollute the world. Why did God give man so dangerous a gift? Because He would have sons, not slaves; men, not machines. He could have created machines of flesh and blood, automatically doing right and avoiding evil. But He would have sons, moral personalities, who should fit themselves for fellowship with Him by freely choosing good and conquering sin, and growing into His glorious likeness. He would not have mechanical obedience or the obedience of terror, but the obedience of love. A terrible price is being paid for the gift of freedom, but at no less cost could sonship be won. God is thus, with infinite patience and forbearance, waiting upon human wills for the consummation of His eternal purpose of love. What is called the *Omnipotence* of God must be understood in the light of these facts. As we have seen,¹ this does not mean that God can do every conceivable thing, but that He is able to do all things that He wills to do, His will being conditioned by His nature. In endowing man with freedom, God has subjected Himself to *limitation*. But the self-limitation of love is not really limitation; it is self-fulfilment.

We may state the Christian view of the relation of God to the world under two main headings.

I. THE WORLD IS GOD'S WORLD

Jesus did not view the world as standing out of any present relation to God. According to the idea of the Deists, God, having created the world, left it to itself,

¹ See Chap. III.

and henceforth has been a passive spectator of its processes and life. We cannot find any suggestion of this idea in the words of Jesus. He always spoke of this world as God's world. God is actively present in the world. He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. v. 45). He clothes the grass of the field (Matt. vi. 30) and feeds the birds of the air (Matt. vi. 26). He cares for the sparrows, and especially for His children (Matt. x. 29 f.). The Father is 'Lord of heaven and earth' (Matt. xi. 25), the heaven is 'the throne of God,' the earth is 'the footstool of His feet' (Matt. v. 34 f.). God is Spirit, with whom man may enter into communion at all times and places. 'To the mind of Jesus the Universe was a spiritual reality through which God expressed His goodness to the sons of men. Jesu's thought of God is always practical; it concerns and asserts His active relation to the world and to man.'¹ We have to reconcile two conceptions which are at first sight contradictory—God is both above the world and in it.

I. GOD TRANSCENDENT AND IMMANENT

God is both transcendent and immanent. Thought has sometimes pressed each of these conceptions to the exclusion of the other. On the one hand, it has been said that God is wholly apart from the world. This is the position of Deism. On the other hand, it has been said God is wholly in the world (indeed, He is the world). This is Pantheism. Christian

¹ J. Y. Simpson: *Land marks in the Struggle Between Science and Religion*, p. 258.

thought steers a course between these two extremes and asserts that God is both transcendent and immanent. By the *transcendence* of God we mean that God is *other* than the world. The idea is not to be interpreted in terms of space, but in terms of personality.¹ It means that the world is not able to impose any external necessity upon God, but that He is Lord of the whole creation. 'As possessing in Himself the purpose, or an idea of the purpose of the whole time-process, God must be regarded as transcending the process itself.'²

By the *immanence*³ of God we mean the *personal* indwelling of God in the world and in men. This excludes the idea that God is an impersonal force pervading Nature, and, in fact, identical with it, and means that God, who is Spirit, is accessible to us at all times and in all places, holds inward fellowship with us, and reveals His power and glory through the world of Nature which He sustains. His indwelling is a personal indwelling. The God to whom Nature leads us is not impersonal Force, but Creative Personality. There is a sense in which the immanence of God implies His transcendence. If we speak of a personal Spirit indwelling the world, the implication is that He is other than the world.

The conception of God as active in a world that is governed by law raises some difficult problems. Science

¹ A person transcends his own states, his organism, and his environment.

² W. R. Sorley: *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 449.

³ The term has been used in many different senses. God is conceived: (1) As the soul of the world, the Spirit animating all Nature; (2) The universal force which takes the forms of heat, light, electricity, &c.; (3) The all-embracing substance of which men and things are but differentiations; (4) The principle of unity underlying all multiplicity; (5) The infinite consciousness in which all things have their existence; (6) The indwelling personality with whom we commune (E. R. E., VII., p. 170).

has formulated the law of the *Uniformity of Nature*—that is, that everything takes place in Nature according to unchanging laws. Is it possible to reconcile the idea of divine control with this idea?

2. THE QUESTION OF MIRACLE

This raises the question of *Miracle*, which may be described as an event, due to divine action, which is not expressible in terms of natural law, or is not in harmony with the observed processes of Nature. In this sense the Incarnation and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ are miracles. Is it credible that they occurred? Nature would, of course, not be trustworthy unless it presented what has been called 'a relatively settled order.' We should have to attribute to God the arbitrariness and caprice which we should then find in Nature. But, as a matter of fact, the principle of the uniformity of Nature rests upon an incomplete induction. 'In order to know it to be a rational principle, we should need to be completely conversant with the ultimate structure of the world.'¹ A man may have a right to say that a miracle has not happened in his own experience or in that of his friends; but he has no right to say that a miracle *cannot* happen. Ours is an unfinished world, and there is, therefore, room in it for fresh creative effort. In a word, the Creator of the universe is *free*. He is not the slave of the forces which He has brought into being, but is their Master. God is not subject to mechanical necessity. The universe is not a closed universe; there is room in it for the free activity of

¹F. R. Tennant: *Miracle and its Philosophical Presuppositions*, p. 17.

its Creator. 'There are substantial arguments available against human free-will . . . as against any physical miracle. If it is appropriate for human free-will to break through psychological laws by the aid of divine grace, then we cannot rule out the possibility that it is possible for the Creator Himself, for sufficient reasons, to supersede the normal sequences of the physical universe.'¹

3. PROVIDENCE

A similar question is that of *Providence*. Are the processes of the world and of life purely mechanical, or does God superintend and control and guide them? If God is immanent in the world, and if Nature is not a closed system, there is room for the directive activity of God, not only in the processes of Nature, but in the life of the individual. Christianity teaches that God cares for us (Matt. x. 29 f., 1 Pet. v. 7). It is often difficult for the individual to realize this, because he seems at the mercy of circumstances. It may be easier to trace the hand of God in the long processes of history than in individual experience. The Christian doctrine of Providence was well stated by St. Paul: 'We know that to them that love God all things work together for good' (Rom. viii. 28). The measure of our discernment of the providential working of God depends upon our attitude to God and upon our conception of the good. Until we love God as a child loves his father we have not the insight to discern the providential ways of God in our lives. The *good* is not to be interpreted purely in terms of material

¹ *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 147.

happiness. God's end concerning the world and each individual is spiritual. The good is to be interpreted in spiritual terms. The apostle's meaning is, therefore, that to those who have insight into, and sympathy with, the ways of God, all things work together to build up their character, to enlarge their spiritual vision, to bring them into closer fellowship with God, and to increase their conquest of the world. By the help of the grace of God every vicissitude can be transformed into a means of realizing the good as God conceives it. This is one of the great truths which the Christian man verifies in his experience rather than by intellectual processes.

4. THE GOD OF NATURE AND OF CHRIST

One of the most difficult problems which confront us in our consideration of the relation of God to the world is the *reconciliation of the God of Nature with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Is the universe partial or indifferent to the moral ideals of the gospel? Are there spiritual laws in the natural world? These questions are not altogether easy to answer, because as yet, in spite of the marvellous advance of science, our knowledge of Nature is far from being complete. But we know enough about Nature to justify us in saying that we can discern in the evolutionary process the qualities of unity, steadfastness, intelligence, and purpose. Moreover, we have to recognize in man, who is a part of Nature, the existence of moral qualities and the sense of moral values, and it is hard to see how these can be alien to the system out of which he has grown. The natural

order, whatever may be said of it, is the order out of which man, with his moral and spiritual values, has arisen. This must be remembered when it seems as though Nature is indifferent to moral and personal values. Nature is to be interpreted in the light of its end, the production of man with his moral and spiritual ideals.¹

But the most difficult problem is that of reconciling the order of Nature (with the 'struggle for life' and 'the survival of the fittest') with the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Much prominence has been given to Tennyson's lines:

Who trusted God was love indeed,
And Love Creation's final law
Though Nature red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed.

Much has also been made of Huxley's contention that the ethical progress of society depends on combating the cosmic process. But these statements are now generally admitted to be exaggerations. Struggle there undoubtedly is in Nature, but the evidence is growing that 'mutual aid' and 'the struggle for the life of others' play a far larger part than was formerly suspected. Further, it is recognized that we have too often interpreted the sufferings of the lower creation in the light of human experience of pain. In the main, animals have not the psychical capacity for pain that man has. Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace wrote: 'On the whole, then, we conclude that the popular idea of

¹ 'Man cannot be a moral Melchizedek; he has strands of virtue in his constitution which are much older than he' (J. A. Thomson: *Science and Religion*, p. 178).

the struggle for existence, entailing misery and pain on the animal world, is the very reverse of the truth. What it really brings about is, the maximum of life and of the enjoyment of life, with the minimum of suffering of pain.' He proceeds to show by quotation that this was the view of Darwin himself.¹

We have no intention to minimize the facts. Pain and suffering are, undoubtedly, present in Nature, but it is difficult for us to see how a moral universe could have been produced without these agencies. In the animal world, as has often been pointed out, pain serves as a danger signal, and struggle has a bracing effect, which saves the organism from decay. In the realm of human experience the value of suffering is still more obvious. Any one who gives the matter serious thought will realize that a world without suffering would be a world robbed of some of its highest moral values. 'The character of a free agent is made by facing and fighting with obstacles. . . . Facile adaptation to familiar environment is no test of character, nor training in character. The personal life cannot grow into the values of which it is capable without facing the hardness of circumstance and the strain of conflict, or without experience of failure. . . . The question at present is not the kind of world in which perfect goodness can exist, but the kind of world in which goodness can begin to grow and make progress towards perfection. . . . And I will hazard the statement that an imperfect world is necessary for the training and growth of moral beings. . . . These spirits have had their beginnings at the lowest levels of organic life. They must fight their way

upwards through the long stages of man's development. In this progress they have to attain reason and freedom, so that the good may be known and chosen; until, tried by every kind of circumstance, they find and assimilate the values which can transform the world and make themselves fit for the higher spiritual life.'¹

II. MAN IS CALLED TO BE A CO-WORKER WITH GOD

Examples of man's co-operation with God in creation may be seen in the development of the fruits of the earth,² but above all in works of creative genius in poetry, music, art, and science. These works have been achieved through the quickening of human faculties, by the indwelling and inward energizing of God. Such co-operation involves communion or prayer.

Prayer is communion—that is, fellowship between man and God. It is man speaking to God and God speaking to man. It is a co-operative fellowship. Prayer is often regarded as synonymous with petition, but, properly understood, it is far more comprehensive than that would imply. It includes adoration, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, petition, and a quiet waiting, that 'the word of the Lord' may come to us. It is, perhaps, the petitionary element in prayer which raises most difficulty. The question is asked, Can prayer change the mind of God or deflect His will? The answer is, of course, in the negative. Our Lord told us to pray in His name—that is, in His spirit and

¹ W. R. Sorley: *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, pp. 343 f.

² For instance, neolithic man produced wheat out of a certain wild Syrian grass (see D'Arcy: *Science and Creation*, pp. 15 f.).

in accordance with His will. The purpose of prayer is not to bring God's will down to ours, but to lift ours up to His. In prayer we enter into co-operation with God for the furtherance of His wise and loving will. In His infinite wisdom and love God has made a universe in which the fulfilment of His purposes is dependent on man's co-operation. When, in prayer, we make our wills one with God's we further His spiritual purposes. This is not to say that prayer has a merely reflex influence on ourselves. It means that we strengthen the spiritual forces which are making for the triumph of the will of God in the world. If the universe is 'a great adventure of creative will, in which we are privileged to co-operate,' the co-operation finds its inspiration and its most powerful expression in the fellowship of prayer. These are not truths which can be irrefutably established by argument. They depend for their ultimate verification on the experience of the Christian man.

III. EPILOGUE

God is love, and His love has gone forth in creative activity, with a view to the production of free spirits, who should live with Him in the fellowship of sons. Creation is to be regarded, not as one act, but as a long process, culminating in the production of free self-conscious personalities capable of fellowship with God and of growth into His likeness. The travail of Nature through countless ages is to be interpreted in the light of its end. 'To this day, we know, the entire creation sighs and throbs with pain; and not only so, but even

we ourselves, who have the Spirit as a foretaste of the future, even we sigh to ourselves as we wait for the redemption of our body that means our full sonship' (Rom. viii. 22 f., Moffatt). The main key to the riddle of the universe is to be found in God's purpose to have *sons*—that is, free, self-conscious personalities who should do His will because they apprehend and accept it, and not because it is imposed upon them. Doubtless God might have acted otherwise. He might have created in human form beings who would have been incapable of going astray, but would have done His will automatically. The father, in the story of the Prodigal Son, might have refused to let the younger son go into the far country. Why did he let him go? He knew his son and he knew the far country, and he must have foreseen the harlots and the husks and the swine. Why did he not refuse the youth his portion and compel him to stay at home? It was because he desired a son in his house, and not a slave. It was love that caused him to let his son go. The youth must buy his own experience, and learn for himself the true values of things; he must vanquish his base passions and must embrace for himself, freely and gladly, the life of his father's house, before he could live in the joyful fellowship of a son. That is why God chose to make man free despite the tremendous risk and cost of freedom.

As a matter of history we know that man has abused his freedom, and has turned aside from the pathway of God's will. But God has never 'despaired of him or abandoned him. He has been with him all the time, even in the 'far country.' This world is, and always has been, God's world, and it has never passed outside

His care and control. He holds the forces of evil in leash, and will not suffer man to be tempted above that he is able to bear (1 Cor. x. 13). From the beginning His love has gone forth to men, seeking to redeem them, and in all their afflictions He has been afflicted. His patience and forbearance have been infinite. He has never abandoned the methods of love for those of force, and He has never been satisfied with anything less than the willing and loving obedience of men and their free co-operation with Him.

‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life’ (John iii. 16). Theologians differ as to whether the Incarnation would have taken place apart from sin. It is a purely speculative question, with which we need not concern ourselves. It is enough for us that the eternal Son of God came and lived among men, making God real to them, stripping sin of every disguise, living a life of sinless obedience, and in resistance to sin dying on the Cross, so manifesting in one crucial act, in time, the love and sacrifice which are eternal in the heart of God. ‘The solution of the riddle of the universe is God; the solution of the riddle of God is Jesus Christ.’ It is the gospel of Jesus Christ which answers our questions as to God’s relation to the world, and which enables us to determine aright our relation to the world. In Christ we see the boundless love of God, and His unchanging purpose to bring many sons unto glory. In Him we receive the assurance that in striving for the salvation of our own souls and the salvation of the world we are workers together with God, and are endued with the mighty power of God. In Him we are

confident that the divine resources are as exhaustless as the divine love, and that through the sacrifice and travail of God and man, working together, the universe is destined to attain to its grand consummation. 'Our faith, that is the conquest which conquers the world' (1 John v. 4, Moffatt).

APPENDIX

'PROOFS' OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

It has been pointed out to me from more than one quarter that a summary of the 'Proofs' of the existence of God would be a convenience to students. These 'proofs' do not properly belong to Theology, but to the Philosophy of Religion. The subject-matter of Christian Theology is the Christian Revelation, in which the existence of God is assumed without argumentative proof. Theology interprets and systematizes the material given in the Christian Revelation, in the light of faith and experience. But as man is a rational being, he inevitably asks whether his faith has the support of reason. The 'proofs' of the existence of God are Reason's response to the demands of Faith. They are not absolutely conclusive, but they bear an unshaken witness to the rationality of the belief in God. Limits of space allow of their being stated here only in a very succinct and summary form.

1. *The Ontological Argument.*—The essential idea in this line of argument is that, because we have the idea of a Perfect Being (i.e. God), therefore that Being exists.

The obvious objection has been raised that if I have an idea of £100 in my pocket, it does not follow that the money is there. It must be admitted that correspondence with reality is not part of the content of the idea of Perfection. None the less, this argument expresses, however

imperfectly, certain great and fundamental truths. (1) As far as it goes our Reason does give us a true and dependable account of Reality. Thought and Reality correspond. If the idea of God is needed for a rational explanation of the universe, we are right in believing that He exists. (2) There is a widespread belief amongst us that Goodness, Truth, and Beauty are the ultimate values in the universe. Either we are deluded, in which case the universe is irrational, or these values are somewhere completely realized and embodied. Belief in God 'makes sense' of the universe.

2. *The Cosmological Argument.*—This argument runs: Everything must have a cause sufficient to account for it. Therefore the universe must have a sufficient cause, and this can only be found in God. Or, it is sometimes stated as follows: Every effect has a cause. The universe is a combination of effects of different causes, which in their turn are effects of other causes, and so on in an infinite regression. An infinite regression of causes is inconceivable, and the only way out of the difficulty is to think of God as the Uncaused Cause, the Great First Cause.

Such criticisms as the following have been advanced: (1) The idea of cause is thought by some to be a purely mental creation. We find that, given the same circumstances, *A* is always followed by *B*. We say, therefore, that *A* is the cause of *B*, which may only mean that *A* is the invariable antecedent of *B*. It is held that this is not the kind of idea from which we can argue the ultimate origin of the world. (2) We are asked, What right have we to deduce that, because an infinite regression of causes is inconceivable, it is therefore impossible? (3) Even if the validity of the argument be admitted, it is contended that it gives us a Deistic conception of the world—a transcendent rather than an immanent God. It does not give us a God 'in whom we live and move and have our being.'

The argument is more helpfully stated, if we substitute for the idea of causation our own experience of the activity of will in ourselves. We should then say that we cannot 'make sense of' the universe apart from the idea of the activity of Creative Will, and by this pathway we are led to belief in the existence of God, transcendent and immanent, the *only* Cause.

3. *The Teleological Argument.*—It is argued that, as there are traces of order and design in the world, there must be an infinite Designer, i.e. God. But (a) as Kant contended, 'All that the argument from Design can possibly prove is an *architect* of the world who is very much limited by the adaptability of the material in which he works.' The argument is not sufficient to prove the existence of a supreme and omnipotent Creator; (b) the argument has been severely criticized in the light of the theory of evolution. It is asked, What room is there for an external Designer in a world in which harmony and adaptation have been and are being produced by an evolutionary process? 'When, for instance, the eye of the higher animals could be regarded as an optical instrument, fashioned, as it were, from outside for the purpose of vision,' it afforded strong evidence in support of the Teleological argument. 'When, however, the eye is regarded as having its origin in a mere pigment spot in certain infusoria, just capable of discriminating between light and darkness, and as having through long ages developed its present structure, by almost insensible increments, the case is altered. It is still more altered, if these increments be regarded as chance variations preserved in each case by the action of natural selection—that is, owing to the accident that each of these variations placed its possessor in a somewhat more favourable position in regard to its new environment.'¹

These difficulties are met if we conceive of an *immanent teleology*, that is, that there is a rational and moral

¹ J. H. Beibitz: *Belief, Faith, and Proof*, p. 100.

principle active in the whole evolutionary process. This presupposes Creative Intelligence. Once more we reach the conception of a God who is both transcendent and immanent, who, while He is other than the world, indwells it and all its processes as its rational and moral and ordering principle.

Not one of these three 'proofs' yields the conclusiveness of absolute logical demonstration, but they supplement each other, and, taken together, they do establish that overwhelming probability which is all the support which Faith needs to ask of Reason. As Butler said, 'Probability is the guide of life.'

There remain two other lines of proof which are not of so abstract a character as those discussed above.

4. *The Moral Argument*.—This is based on the fact that man is conscious of a moral universe in which Conscience is supreme. Conceptions of right and wrong vary at different stages of development, but, that there is a difference between right and wrong, men do not doubt. Man has never been able to rid himself of the inward imperative 'I ought.' How is this to be explained? Not on any naturalistic theory. Evolutionary theories of ethics may throw light on the development of conscience, but they do not explain its *origin*. The moral imperative is satisfactorily accounted for only if there be a God of whose mind and will it is the expression. The form which this argument takes is not that the inward 'I ought' is a proof of the existence of God, but that the latter is the only satisfactory explanation of the former.

5. *The Historical Argument*.—The existence of God is said to be proved by man's universal striving after God. That men have, in all ages, felt after God is not absolute proof that He exists, but His existence is the only satisfactory explanation of the groping of all generations after Him. 'The long upward journey of the race, during which

the idea of a spiritual God has gradually taken form and substance in human minds, becomes a meaningless movement if there be no Reality corresponding to the idea. . . . It is hard to believe that this growing consciousness of God as a spiritual and ethical Being has not its source and ground in God Himself.¹

¹ Galloway: *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 393.

LIST OF BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY ¹

CHAPTER I

- C. Gore: *Reconstruction of Belief* (Murray).
 D. M. Edwards: *The Philosophy of Religion* (Hodder & Stoughton).*
- J. R. Illingworth: *Reason and Revelation* (Macmillan).
 J. Orr: *Revelation and Inspiration* (Duckworth).
 G. B. Gray: *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament* (Duckworth).
 A. S. Peake: *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament* (Duckworth).
The Nature of Scripture (Hodder & Stoughton).
 A. Duff: *History of Old Testament Criticism* (Watts & Co.).
 H. S. Nash: *History of the Higher Criticism of the New Testament* (Macmillan).*

CHAPTER II

- S. Cave: *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (Duckworth).
 E. Grubb: *Christ in Christian Thought* (J. Clarke).
The Word Made Flesh (S.C.M.).
 C. Gore: *Reconstruction of Belief* (Murray).
 J. A. Findlay: *Jesus in the First Gospel* (Hodder & Stoughton).
 H. A. A. Kennedy: *The Theology of the Epistles* (Duckworth).
 H. R. Mackintosh: *The Person of Jesus Christ* (T. & T. Clark).

CHAPTER III

- W. R. Thomson: *The Christian Idea of God* (J. Clarke).*
 W. N. Clarke: *The Christian Doctrine of God* (T. & T. Clark).
 J. R. Illingworth: *Personality, Human and Divine* (Macmillan).
 J. Scott Lidgett: *The Fatherhood of God* (Epworth Press).

CHAPTER IV

- Wheeler Robinson: *The Christian Doctrine of Man* (T. & T. Clark).

¹ The books with an asterisk may be out of print, but may be consulted in libraries.

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CHAPTER V

- E. J. Bicknell: *The Christian Idea of Sin and of Original Sin* (Longmans).
 R. S. Moxon: *The Doctrine of Sin* (Allen & Unwin).
 F. R. Tennant: *The Concept of Sin* (Cambridge Press).

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 H. M. Hughes: *What is the Atonement?* (J. Clarke).

CHAPTER VII

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 W. T. Davison: *The Indwelling Spirit* (Hodder & Stoughton)*
 A. J. Macdonald: *The Holy Spirit* (S.P.C.K.).
 A. L. Humphries: *The Holy Spirit in Faith and Experience* (Hodder & Stoughton).*

CHAPTER VIII

- F. J. Hall: *The Trinity* (Longmans).
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 J. Hastings: *Dictionary of the Bible* (Ext. Vol.) art. on 'Trinity.'

CHAPTER IX

- C. R. Smith: *The Christian Experience* (Epworth Press).
 J. A. Beet: *The New Life in Christ* (Hodder & Stoughton).*
 G. Jackson: *The Fact of Conversion* (Hodder & Stoughton).*

CHAPTER X

- J. R. Cohu: *The Evolution of the Christian Ministry* (Murray).
 C. Gore: *The Holy Spirit and the Church* (Murray) (for the Catholic view).
 F. J. A. Hort: *The Christian Ecclesia* (Macmillan).
 T. A. Lindsey: *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (Hodder & Stoughton).*
 A. J. Macdonald: *The Evangelical Doctrine of Holy Communion* (Heffer).

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 A. E. Garvie: *The Christian Doctrine of the Godhead* (Hodder & Stoughton).
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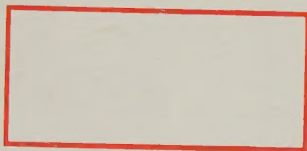
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